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Foucault/Clayton and Curling: Questions of Authorship
Neale: Documentary and Spectacle—'Triumph of the Will'
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Marshall: Video Art and Technology
Ideology and Class/Ethnographic Film

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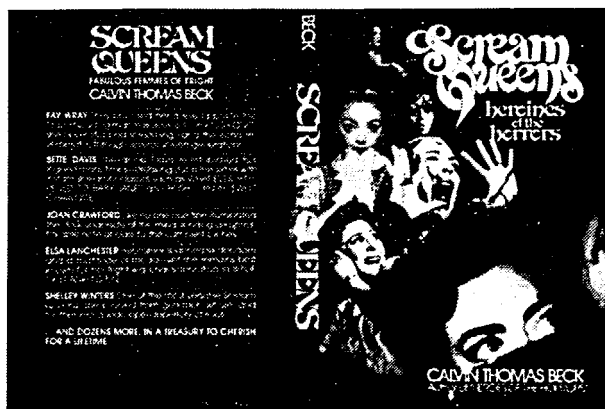


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SCREEN Day Event

Instead of its quarterly readers' meetings, the *Screen* Editorial Board will be holding a day event on Saturday 28 April 1979, at the Polytechnic of Central London, 309 Regent Street, London W1.

The morning session (11.00 am-1.00 pm), introduced by members of the Editorial Board, will be concerned with notions of art cinema. The afternoon session (2.00 pm-3.30 pm) will be an open session, in which we hope readers will raise issues across the range of *Screen's* work in the last four numbers of the magazine (v19 nn1-4).

The event will be run on the same basis as readers' meetings — there will be no additional documentation, no admission fee and no need to 'book' a place.

SCREEN EDUCATION

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State/Education/Media

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith: The State. James Donald: Green Paper, Noise of Crisis. Fredric Jameson: *Dog Day Afternoon* as a Political Film. Ian Connell: The Politics of Anthony Smith. Graham Murdock and Robin McCron: The Television-and-Violence Debate.

Subscriptions and prices: see page 144

The *Screen* Editorial Board welcomes manuscripts and proposals for articles from contributors. It is very helpful if manuscripts are typed double spaced with wide margins and are suitable for photocopying. Manuscripts will be acknowledged on receipt, submitted to the Board for its consideration and the Board's decision conveyed to the writer.

Screen is indexed in the International Index to Film Periodicals, and the International Index to Television Periodicals (FIAF). Photocopies and microfilm copies of *Screen* are available from University Microfilms International see p144.

WEEKEND AND DAY SCHOOLS

April 28

Screen Event: 'Notions of Art Cinema' (for details see p 6)

May 19-20

Weekend School: Genre and Authorship

Summer Term (dates to be fixed)

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MICROFILM: *Screen* is available on microfilm from University Microfilms International, 18 Bedford Row London WC1R 4EJ and 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor Michigan 48106 at the following rates: *35mm positive roll film* Screen Education October 1959-October 1968, £18.70; Screen Education January 1969-Winter 1972, £18.70; Screen volumes 13-18 £4.50 per year; v19 £3.80; *16mm positive roll film* volumes 13-18 £4.50 per year; v19 £3.80; *Microfiche* v18 £4.50, v19 £3.80; all film prices subject to VAT at the current rate (8%).

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Editorial

Questions around authorship have figured prominently in *Screen's* work: in its insistence that the author is an ideological construction, and that any attention to cinema as ideological construction must come back to notions of authorship. Work on psychoanalysis and cinema, on a theory of the subject, was instituted partly in response to an impasse in *auteur* theory. The notion of author, even as developed in structural criticism, separated out the text with its own interior unity, from ideology, which might appear in the text in a form mediated by the text's structures, participating in its themes and shifting antinomies, but nevertheless separate and distinct from the text. It also separated author and text implying that the author was a punctual source, a creative individual giving expression to a work. Accounts of the theory of the subject in *Screen* re-casts these relations – the notion of the subject, subject-ivity produced by the text, of the author as a fantasy construction by the reader, of the text constructing both reader and viewer. The move away from authorship to psychoanalysis was seen as a precondition for handling 'the major ideological construction',¹ of authorship with some conjunctural specificity. *Screen* has not, however, returned to these questions. While notions of authorship may have been displaced from *Screen's* concerns, they have continued to circulate and have effects within critical discourse. Recognising its dominance within film-criticism and its organising role in film production, distribution and exhibition, attempts have been made, for instance in the Edinburgh Festival and through some BFI publications, to raise questions of subjectivity within and across discourses of authorship.

In publishing two articles on authorship we indicate the need to return to considerations of the ideological articulation of

1 Stephen Heath, 'Comment on "The Idea of Authorship"', *Screen* Autumn 1973, v14 n3.

- 10 authorship.² Michel's Foucault's article makes clear that notions of authorship are only one possible specification of discursive functioning. Delivered ten years ago, the arguments of his lecture are still relevant to teaching today. He also elaborates the notion of the 'author-function' in ways which insist on the necessity for theorising the conjunctural functioning of discourses of authorship: 'the author-function is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine and articulate the realm of discourses'.

Sue Clayton and Jonathan Curling attempt to chart some of those legal and institutional systems as they affect modes of production and consumption of film, particularly independent film. Referring to the early 1930s, in his analysis of Brecht's relationship to the film industry (*Screen* Winter 1975/76, v16 n4), Ben Brewster pointed out that: 'rather than recognising any degree of collective creativity, or finding individual creativity a bar to artistic production, capital has attributed more and more individual creativity to its more specifically cinematic workers' (p 23). Clayton and Curling take up the question of authorship in relation to film and television production today, where both the nature of the product and the mode of funding are considerably different from the funding of film production in the 1930s. They see the continuing need to identify creative individuals in film and television as an indication of the force of discourses of authorship in the social formation. This poses particular problems for independent film-making groups and collectives who find their work, however oppositionally conceived, taken up by discourses of authorship. Clayton and Curling insist on the need to shift the discursive 'placing' of cinema – a shift which can only be produced by the production of other discourses: critical and theoretical discourses to which *Screen* has an important contribution to make; and arguments (which the IFA is currently putting to left-wing sections of the Labour administration) for a greater degree of economic autonomy, and the 'reclassifying' of film as a loss-making operation which should be permanently state financed for cultural (ie ideological) reasons. The contradictions of recognising the wide variety of individual creative contributions while maintaining a commercially saleable unit of work have led to proposed accommodations in copyright law, in particular the recognition of joint-authorship. This can be seen as marking a partial shift back to Brecht and Weill's notion of a contradiction between a system of law based on notions of individual creativity and what they saw as the intrinsically *collective* activity of film production.

Questions of the autonomy of television's signifying practices

2 Considerations which we hope will be taken up in our day event on notions of the art film, and the forthcoming SEFT school on genre and authorship—see p8 for details.

are raised by Ian Connell in his article on one area of television production, that of news and current affairs. He argues against the terms of the manipulation thesis in which television, as the instrument of certain class interests, produces biased and distorted accounts of social reality. He insists that through its fulfilment of its liberal editorial imperatives of 'neutral', 'unbiased' accounting, it produces discourses which reinforce the *status quo*, which have the effect of blocking politico-economic antagonisms. By producing notions of 'moderate public opinion', 'rational understanding', 'the consensus', 'the man in the street', television produces dominant definitions which circulate and have effects in the social formation at large. 11

Dominance of institutional television practices is at issue in Stuart Marshall's article on video. He describes how video technology was developed in relation to economic and ideological imperatives. Television receivers are situated in the home with the family as audience, rather than in cinemas. The massive capitalisation of television technology which reinforced radio's constitution of an audience for broadcasts, rather than an audience which itself produces broadcasts (as Brecht, for example, envisaged) prevented any possible appropriation by independent video workers of the means of televisual production. Lightweight video technology, developed as audio-visual aids for marketing, surveillance and education, could have also been used to open up the possibility of a social practice of television. In fact the new technology was taken up within safely separate areas of experiment and individual creativity, which even when it attempted to contest the hegemony of broadcast television, did so through deconstruction of the images of broadcast television, but does not produce alternative broadcastable images. In commenting on the current situation, he indicates various features which deserve further consideration in *Screen*: the fragmentation of the audience which could threaten advertising revenues; the resistance of trade unions to the use of new technology as a means of increasing profits through redundancies; the incorporation of aspects of the video-artists' discourse within broadcast forms; accommodation to demands for a more 'socially responsible' medium by the provision of access programmes.

Following on from his work on propaganda (*Screen* Autumn 1977 v18 n3), Steve Neale's article on *Triumph of the Will* elaborates a notion of spectacle as fascinated gaze, addressing the 'imbrication of looking and the visible, not as the prior condition to the construction of a form of knowledge', as in documentary, 'but rather as that which hovers constantly across the gap between the eye and the object presented to it in the process of the scopic drive'. While documentary disavows that gap, subordinating it in its observational mode to codes of exposition required to produce its knowledge effect, spectacle addresses the scopic drive luring

- 12 the gaze of the spectator, filling it with the plenitude of the image itself. It is the failure of criticism to deal with these contradictory elements in the film that result, he argues, in the critics' simultaneous valorisation of the film's 'poetry' and 'style', and opposition to the film's content. Only by demonstrating that ideology and politics are implicated within the cinematic, rather than separated from it, as traditional critical discourse asserts, can the discursive functioning of this film be approached.

Finally, two contributions take issue with articles and debates in previous numbers of *Screen*. Tony Beeton argues for a notion of ethnographic film as produced and consumed within the institutions and discourses of television. Nicholas Garnham challenges the direction of *Screen*'s recent work in insisting on the primacy of the economic in determining representations, of representations as expression of determinate economic relations. Debates about positions in *Screen* and the effects of its work tend to take place outside the magazine itself, and while we clearly do not share Garnham's notions of determination, we are concerned to take up such debates as they are elaborated in the film culture as a whole.

MARK NASH
STEVE NEALE

What is an Author?†

Michel Foucault

In proposing this slightly odd question, I am conscious of the need for an explanation. To this day, the 'author' remains an open question both with respect to its general function within discourse and in my own writings; that is, this question permits me to return to certain aspects of my own work which now appear ill-advised and misleading. In this regard, I wish to propose a necessary criticism and re-evaluation.

For instance, my objective in *The Order of Things*¹ had been to analyse verbal clusters as discursive layers which fall outside the familiar categories of a book, a work, or an author. But while I considered 'natural history', the 'analysis of wealth', and 'political economy' in general terms, I neglected a similar analysis of the author and his works; it is perhaps due to this omission that I employed the names of authors throughout this book in a naïve and often crude fashion. I spoke of Buffon, Cuvier, Ricardo, and others as well, but failed to realize that I had allowed their names to function ambiguously. This has proved an embarrassment to me in that my oversight has served to raise two pertinent objections.

It was argued that I had not properly described Buffon or his work and that my handling of Marx was pitifully inadequate in terms of the totality of his thought. Although these objections were obviously justified, they ignored the task I had set myself: I had

† This essay originally appeared in the *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie*, vLXIV n3, 1969, pp 73-104. It was given as a paper to the Society at the Collège de France on 22 February 1969. It is reprinted from Foucault's *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, Oxford, 1977, by permission of Cornell University Press and Basil Blackwell. In addition we are publishing sections of the discussion which followed Foucault's paper. All footnotes have been added by the editor of *Screen*.

1 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, London 1970.

14 no intention of describing Buffon or Marx or of reproducing their statements or implicit meanings, but, simply stated, I wanted to locate the rules that formed a certain number of concepts and theoretical relationships in their works. In addition, it was argued that I had created monstrous families by bringing together names as disparate as Buffon and Linnaeus or in placing Cuvier next to Darwin in defiance of the most readily observable family resemblances and natural ties. This objection also seems inappropriate since I had never tried to establish a genealogical table of exceptional individuals, nor was I concerned in forming an intellectual daguerreotype of the scholar or naturalist of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. In fact, I had no intention of forming any family, whether holy or perverse. In the contrary, I wanted to determine – a much more modest task – the functional conditions of specific discursive practices.

Then why did I use the names of authors in *The Order of Things*? Why not avoid their use altogether, or, short of that, why not define the manner in which they were used? These questions appear fully justified and I have tried to gauge their implications and consequences in a book that will appear shortly.² These questions have determined my effort to situate comprehensive discursive units, such as 'natural history' or 'political economy', and to establish the methods and instruments for delimiting, analysing, and describing these unities. Nevertheless, as a privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, and literature, or in the history of philosophy and science, the question of the author demands a more direct response. Even now, when we study the history of a concept, a literary genre, or a branch of philosophy, these concerns assume a relatively weak and secondary position in relation to the solid and fundamental role of an author and his works.

For the purposes of this paper, I will set aside a sociohistorical analysis of the author as an individual and the numerous questions that deserve attention in this context; how the author was individualized in a culture such as ours; the status we have given the author, for instance, when we began our research into authenticity and attribution; the systems of valorization in which he was included; or the moment when the stories of heroes gave way to an author's biography; the conditions that fostered the formulation of the fundamental critical category of 'the man and his work'. For the time being, I wish to restrict myself to the singular relationship that holds between an author and a text, the manner in which a text apparently points to this figure who is outside and precedes it.

Beckett supplies a direction: 'What matter who's speaking.'

2 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans A M Sheridan Smith (London, 1972) was published in France in 1969.

someone said, what matter who's speaking'. In an indifference such as this we must recognize one of the fundamental ethical principles of contemporary writing. It is not simply 'ethical' because it characterizes our way of speaking and writing, but because it stands as an immanent rule, endlessly adopted and yet never fully applied. As a principle, it dominates writing as an ongoing practice and slights our customary attention to the finished product. For the sake of illustration, we need only consider two of its major themes. First, the writing of our day has freed itself from the necessity of 'expression'; it only refers to itself, yet it is not restricted to the confines of interiority. On the contrary, we recognize it in its exterior deployment. This reversal transforms writing into an interplay of signs, regulated less by the content it signifies than by the very nature of the signifier. Moreover, it implies an action that is always testing the limits of its regularity, transgressing and reversing an order that it accepts and manipulates. Writing unfolds like a game that inevitably moves beyond its own rules and finally leaves them behind. Thus, the essential basis of this writing is not the exalted emotions related to the act of composition or the insertion of a subject into language. Rather, it is primarily concerned with creating an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears.

The second theme is even more familiar: it is the kinship between writing and death. This relationship inverts the age-old conception of Greek narrative or epic, which was designed to guarantee the immortality of a hero. The hero accepted an early death because his life, consecrated and magnified by death, passed into immortality; and the narrative redeemed his acceptance of death. In a different sense, Arabic stories, and *The Arabian Nights* in particular, had as their motivation, their theme and pretext, this strategy for defeating death. Storytellers continued their narratives late into the night to forestall death and to delay the inevitable moment when everyone must fall silent. Scheherazade's story is a desperate inversion of murder; it is the effort, throughout all those nights, to exclude death from the circle of existence. This conception of a spoken or written narrative as a protection against death has been transformed by our culture. Writing is now linked to sacrifice and to the sacrifice of life itself; it is a voluntary obliteration of the self that does not require representation in books because it takes place in the everyday existence of the writer. Where a work had the duty of creating immortality, it now attains the right to kill, to become the murderer of its author. Flaubert, Proust, and Kafka are obvious examples of this reversal. In addition, we find the link between writing and death manifested in the total effacement of the individual characteristics of the writer; the quibbling and confrontations that a writer generates between himself and his text cancel out the signs of his particular individuality. If we wish to know the writer in our day, it will be through the singularity of his absence and in his link to death, which has transformed him into

16 a victim of his own writing. While all of this is familiar in philosophy, as in literary criticism, I am not certain that the consequences derived from the disappearance or death of the author have been fully explored or that the importance of this event has been appreciated. To be specific, it seems to me that the themes destined to replace the privileged position accorded the author have merely served to arrest the possibility of genuine change. Of these, I will examine two that seem particularly important.

To begin with, the thesis concerning a work. It has been understood that the task of criticism is not to re-establish the ties between an author and his work or to reconstitute an author's thought and experience through his works and, further, that criticism should concern itself with the structures of a work, its architectonic forms, which are studied for their intrinsic and internal relationships. Yet, what of a context that questions the concept of a work? What, in short, is the strange unit designated by the term, work? What is necessary to its composition, if a work is not something written by a person called an 'author'? Difficulties arise on all sides if we raise the question in this way. If an individual is not an author, what are we to make of those things he has written or said, left among his papers or communicated to others? Is this not properly a work? What, for instance, were Sade's papers before he was consecrated as an author? Little more, perhaps, than rolls of paper on which he endlessly unravelled his fantasies while in prison.

Assuming that we are dealing with an author, is everything he wrote and said, everything he left behind, to be included in his work? This problem is both theoretical and practical. If we wish to publish the complete works of Nietzsche, for example, where do we draw the line? Certainly, everything must be published, but can we agree on what 'everything' means? We will, of course, include everything that Nietzsche himself published, along with the drafts of his works, his plans for aphorisms, his marginal notations and corrections. But what if, in a notebook filled with aphorisms, we find a reference, a reminder of an appointment, an address, or a laundry bill, should this be included in his works? Why not? These practical considerations are endless once we consider how a work can be extracted from the millions of traces left by an individual after his death. Plainly, we lack a theory to encompass the questions generated by a work and the empirical activity of those who naively undertake the publication of the complete works of an author often suffers from the absence of this framework. Yet more questions arise. Can we say that *The Arabian Nights*, and *Stromates* of Clement of Alexandria, or the *Lives* of Diogenes Laertes constitute works? Such questions only begin to suggest the range of our difficulties, and, if some have found it convenient to bypass the individuality of the writer or his status as an author to concentrate on a work, they have failed to appreciate the equally problematic nature of the word 'work' and the unity it designates.

Another thesis has detained us from taking full measure of the author's disappearance. It avoids confronting the specific event that makes it possible and, in subtle ways, continues to preserve the existence of the author. This is the notion of *écriture*. Strictly speaking, it should allow us not only to circumvent references to an author, but to situate his recent absence. The conception of *écriture*, as currently employed, is concerned with neither the act of writing nor the indications, as symptoms or signs within a text, of an author's meaning; rather, it stands for a remarkably profound attempt to elaborate the conditions of any text, both the conditions of its spatial dispersion and its temporal deployment.

It appears, however, that this concept, as currently employed, has merely transposed the empirical characteristics of an author to a transcendental anonymity. The extremely visible signs of the author's empirical activity are effaced to allow the play, in parallel or opposition, of religious and critical modes of characterization. In granting a primordial status to writing, do we not, in effect, simply reinscribe in transcendental terms the theological affirmation of its sacred origin or a critical belief in its creative nature? To say that writing, in terms of the particular history it made possible, is subjected to forgetfulness and repression, is this not to reintroduce in transcendental terms the religious principle of hidden meanings (which require interpretation) and the critical assumption of implicit significations, silent purposes, and obscure contents (which give rise to commentary)? Finally, is not the conception of writing as absence a transposition into transcendental terms of the religious belief in a fixed and continuous tradition or the aesthetic principle that proclaims the survival of the work as a kind of enigmatic supplement of the author beyond his own death?

This conception of *écriture* sustains the privileges of the author through the safeguard of the *a priori*; the play of representations that formed a particular image of the author is extended within a grey neutrality. The disappearance of the author — since Mallarmé, an event of our time — is held in check by the transcendental. Is it not necessary to draw a line between those who believe that we can continue to situate our present discontinuities within the historical and transcendental tradition of the nineteenth century and those who are making a great effort to liberate themselves, once and for all, from this conceptual framework?

It is obviously insufficient to repeat empty slogans: the author has disappeared; God and man died a common death. Rather, we should re-examine the empty space left by the author's disappearance, we should attentively observe, along its gaps and fault lines, its new demarcations, and the reapportionment of this void; we should await the fluid functions released by this disappearance. In this context we can briefly consider the problems that arise

- 18 in the use of an author's name. What is the name of an author? How does it function? Far from offering a solution, I will attempt to indicate some of the difficulties related to these questions.

The name of an author poses all the problems related to the category of the proper name. (Here, I am referring to the work of John Searle,³ among others.) Obviously not a pure and simple reference, the proper name (and the author's name as well) has other than indicative functions. It is more than a gesture, a finger pointed at someone; it is, to a certain extent, the equivalent of a description. When we say 'Aristotle', we are using a word that means one or a series of definite descriptions of the type: 'the author of the *Analytics*', or 'the founder of ontology', and so forth. Furthermore, a proper name has other functions than that of signification: when we discover that Rimbaud has not written *La Chasse spirituelle*, we cannot maintain that the meaning of the proper name or this author's name has been altered. The proper name and the name of an author oscillate between the poles of description and designation, and, granting that they are linked to what they name, they are not totally determined either by their descriptive or designative functions. Yet – and it is here that the specific difficulties attending an author's name appear – the link between a proper name and the individual being named and the link between an author's name and that which it names are not isomorphic and do not function in the same way; and these differences require clarification.

To learn, for example, that Pierre Dupont does not have blue eyes, does not live in Paris, and is not a doctor does not invalidate the fact that the name, Pierre Dupont, continues to refer to the same person; there has been no modification of the designation that links the name to the person. With the name of an author, however, the problems are far more complex. The disclosure that Shakespeare was not born in the house that tourists now visit would not modify the functioning of the author's name, but if it were proved that he had not written the sonnets that we attribute to him, this would constitute a significant change and affect the manner in which the author's name functions. Moreover, if we establish that Shakespeare wrote Bacon's *Organon* and that the same author was responsible for both the works of Shakespeare and those of Bacon, we would have introduced a third type of alteration which completely modifies the functioning of the author's name. Consequently, the name of an author is not precisely a proper name among others.

Many other factors sustain this paradoxical singularity of the name of an author. It is altogether different to maintain that Pierre Dupont does not exist and that Homer or Hermes Trismegistus

3 eg John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge, 1969.

have never existed. While the first negation merely implies that there is no one by the name of Pierre Dupont, the second indicates that several individuals have been referred to by one name or that the real author possessed none of the traits traditionally associated with Homer or Hermes. Neither is it the same thing to say that Jacques Durand, not Pierre Dupont, is the real name of X and that Stendhal's name was Henri Beyle. We could also examine the function and meaning of such statements as 'Bourbaki is this or that person', and 'Victor Eremita, Climacus, Anticlimacus, Frater Taciturnus, Constantin Constantius, all of these are Kierkegaard'. 19

These differences indicate that an author's name is not simply an element of speech (as a subject, a complement, or an element that could be replaced by a pronoun or other parts of speech). Its presence is functional in that it serves as a means of classification. A name can group together a number of texts and thus differentiate them from others. A name also establishes different forms of relationships among texts. Neither Hermes nor Hippocrates existed in the sense that we can say Balzac existed, but the fact that a number of texts were attached to a single name implies that the relationships of homogeneity, filiation, reciprocal explanation, authentication, or of common utilization were established among them. Finally, the author's name characterizes a particular manner of existence of discourse. Discourse that possesses an author's name is not to be immediately consumed and forgotten; neither is it accorded the momentary attention given to ordinary, fleeting words. Rather, its status and its manner of reception are regulated by the culture in which it circulates.

We can conclude that, unlike a proper name, which moves from the interior of a discourse to the real person outside who produced it, the name of the author remains at the contours of texts – separating one from the other, defining their form, and characterizing their mode of existence. It points to the existence of certain groups of discourse and refers to the status of this discourse within a society and culture. The author's name is not a function of a man's civil status, nor is it fictional; it is situated in the breach, among the discontinuities, which gives rise to new groups of discourse and their singular mode of existence. Consequently, we can say that in our culture, the name of an author is a variable that accompanies only certain texts to the exclusion of others: a private letter may have a signatory, but it does not have an author; a contract can have an underwriter, but not an author; and, similarly an anonymous poster attached to a wall may have a writer, but he cannot be an author. In this sense, the function of an author is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society.

In dealing with the 'author' as a function of discourse, we must

20 consider the characteristics of a discourse that support this use and determine its difference from other discourses. If we limit our remarks to only those books or texts with authors, we can isolate four different features.

First, they are objects of appropriation; the form of property they have become is of a particular type whose legal codification was accomplished some years ago. It is important to notice, as well, that its status as property is historically secondary to the penal code controlling its appropriation. Speeches and books were assigned real authors, other than mythical or important religious figures, only when the author became subject to punishment and to the extent that his discourse was considered transgressive. In our culture – undoubtedly in others as well – discourse was not originally a thing, a product, or a possession, but an action situated in a bipolar field of sacred and profane, lawful and unlawful, religious and blasphemous. It was a gesture charged with risks long before it became a possession caught in a circuit of property values. But it was at the moment when a system of ownership and strict copyright rules were established (toward the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century) that the transgressive properties always intrinsic to the act of writing became the forceful imperative of literature. It is as if the author, at the moment he was accepted into the social order of property which governs our culture, was compensating for this new status by reviving the older bipolar field of discourse in a systematic practice of transgression and by restoring the danger of writing which, on another side, had been conferred the benefits of property.

Secondly, the 'author-function' is not universal or constant in all discourse. Even within our civilization, the same types of texts have not always required authors; there was a time when those texts which we now call 'literary' (stories, folk tales, epics, and tragedies) were accepted, circulated, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author. Their anonymity was ignored because their real or supposed age was a sufficient guarantee of their authenticity. Texts, however, that we now call 'scientific' (dealing with cosmology and the heavens, medicine or illness, the natural sciences or geography) were only considered truthful during the Middle Ages if the name of the author was indicated. Statements on the order of 'Hippocrates said . . .' or 'Pliny tells us that . . .' were not merely formulas for an argument based on authority, they marked a proven discourse. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a totally new conception was developed when scientific texts were accepted on their own merits and positioned within an anonymous and coherent conceptual system of established truths and methods of verification. Authentication no longer required reference to the individual who had produced them; the role of the author disappeared as an index of truthfulness and, where it remained as an inventor's name, it was merely to denote

a specific theorem or proposition, a strange effect, a property, a body, a group of elements, or pathological syndrome. 21

At the same time, however, 'literary' discourse was acceptable only if it carried an author's name; every text of poetry or fiction was obliged to state its author and the date, place and circumstance of its writing. The meaning and value attributed to the text depended on this information. If by accident or design a text was presented anonymously, every effort was made to locate its author. Literary anonymity was of interest only as a puzzle to be solved as, in our day, literary works are totally dominated by the sovereignty of the author. (Undoubtedly, these remarks are far too categorical. Criticism has been concerned for some time now with aspects of a text not fully dependent on the notion of an individual creator; studies of genre or the analysis of recurring textual motifs and their variations from a norm other than the author. Furthermore, where in mathematics the author has become little more than a handy reference for a particular theorem or group of propositions, the reference to an author in biology and medicine, or to the date of his research has a substantially different bearing. This latter reference, more than simply indicating the source of information, attests to the 'reliability' of the evidence, since it entails an appreciation of the techniques and experimental materials available at a given time and in a particular laboratory.)

The third point concerning this 'author-function' is that it is not formed spontaneously through the simple attribution of a discourse to an individual. It results from a complex operation whose purpose is to construct the rational entity we call an author. Undoubtedly, this construction is assigned a 'realistic' dimension as we speak of an individual's 'profundity' or 'creative' power, his intentions or the original inspiration manifested in writing. Nevertheless, these aspects of an individual, which we designate as an author (or which comprise an individual as an author), are projections, in terms always more or less psychological, of our way of handling texts: in the comparisons we make, the traits we extract as pertinent, the continuities we assign, or the exclusions we practise. In addition, all these operations vary according to the period and the form of discourse concerned. A 'philosopher' and a 'poet' are not constructed in the same manner; and the author of an eighteenth-century novel was formed differently from the modern novelist. There are, nevertheless, transhistorical constants in the rules that govern the construction of an author.

In literary criticism, for example, the traditional methods for defining an author – or, rather, for determining the configuration of the author from existing texts – derive in large part from those used in the Christian tradition to authenticate (or to reject) the particular texts in its possession. Modern criticism, in its desire to 'recover' the author from a work, employs devices strongly reminiscent of Christian exegesis when it wished to prove the

22 value of a text by ascertaining the holiness of its author. In *De Viris Illustribus*, Saint Jerome maintains that homonymy is not proof of the common authorship of several works, since many individuals could have the same name or someone could have perversely appropriated another's name. The name, as an individual mark, is not sufficient as it relates to a textual tradition. How, then, can several texts be attributed to an individual author? What norms, related to the function of the author, will disclose the involvement of several authors? According to Saint Jerome, there are four criteria: the texts that must be eliminated from the list of works attributed to a single author are those inferior to the others (thus, the author is defined as a standard level of quality); those whose ideas conflict with the doctrine expressed in the others (here the author is defined as a certain field of conceptual or theoretical coherence); those written in a different style and containing words and phrases not ordinarily found in the other works (the author is seen as a stylistic uniformity); and those referring to events of historical figures subsequent to the death of the author (the author is thus a definite historical figure in which a series of events converge). Although modern criticism does not appear to have these same suspicions concerning authentication, its strategies for defining the author present striking similarities. The author explains the presence of certain events within a text, as well as their transformations, distortions, and their various modifications (and this through an author's biography or by reference to his particular point of view, in the analysis of his social preferences and his position within a class or by delineating his fundamental objectives). The author also constitutes a principle of unity in writing where any unevenness of production is ascribed to changes caused by evolution, maturation, or outside influence. In addition, the author serves to neutralize the contradictions that are found in a series of texts. Governing this function is the belief that there must be – at a particular level of an author's thought, of his conscious or unconscious desire – a point where contradictions are resolved, where the incompatible elements can be shown to relate to one another or to cohere around a fundamental and originating contradiction. Finally, the author is a particular source of expression who, in more or less finished forms, is manifested equally well, and with similar validity, in a text, in letters, fragments, drafts, and so forth. Thus, even while Saint Jerome's four principles of authenticity might seem largely inadequate to modern critics, they, nevertheless, define the critical modalities now used to display the function of the author.

However, it would be false to consider the function of the author as a pure and simple reconstruction after the fact of a text given as passive material, since a text always bears a number of signs that refer to the author. Well known to grammarians, these textual signs are personal pronouns, adverbs of time and place, and the conjugation of verbs. But it is important to note that these

elements have a different bearing on texts with an author and on those without one. In the latter, these 'shifters' refer to a real speaker and to an actual deictic situation, with certain exceptions such as the case of indirect speech in the first person. When discourse is linked to an author, however, the role of 'shifters' is more complex and variable. It is well known that in a novel narrated in the first person, neither the first person pronoun, the present indicative tense, nor, for that matter, its signs of localization refer directly to the writer, either to the time when he wrote, or to the specific act of writing; rather, they stand for a 'second self' whose similarity to the author is never fixed and undergoes considerable alteration within the course of a single book. It would be as false to seek the author in relation to the actual writer as to the fictional narrator; the 'author-function' arises out of their scission – in the division and distance of the two. One might object that this phenomenon only applies to novels or poetry, to a context of 'quasi-discourse', but, in fact, all discourse that supports this 'author-function' is characterized by the plurality of egos. In a mathematical treatise, the ego who indicates the circumstances of composition in the preface is not identical, either in terms of his position or his function, to the 'I' who concludes a demonstration within the body of the text. The former implies a unique individual who, at a given time and place, succeeded in completing a project, whereas the latter indicates an instance and plan of demonstration that anyone could perform provided the same set of axioms, preliminary operations, and an identical set of symbols were used. It is also possible to locate a third ego: one who speaks of the goals of his investigation, the obstacles encountered, its results, and the problems yet to be solved and this 'I' would function in a field of existing or future mathematical discourses. We are not dealing with a system of dependencies where a first and essential use of the 'I' is reduplicated, as a kind of fiction, by the other two. On the contrary, the 'author-function' in such discourses operates so as to effect the simultaneous dispersion of the three egos.

Further elaboration would, of course, disclose other characteristics of the 'author-function', but I have limited myself to the four that seemed the most obvious and important. They can be summarized in the following manner: the 'author-function' is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourses; it does not operate in a uniform manner in all discourses, at all times, and in any given culture; it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator, but through a series of precise and complex procedures; it does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual insofar as it simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy.

- 24 I am aware that until now I have kept my subject within unjustifiable limits; I should also have spoken of the 'author-function' in painting, music, technical fields, and so forth. Admitting that my analysis is restricted to the domain of discourse, it seems that I have given the term 'author' an excessively narrow meaning. I have discussed the author only in the limited sense of a person to whom the production of a text, a book, or a work can be legitimately attributed. However, it is obvious that even within the realm of discourse a person can be the author of much more than a book – of a theory, for instance, of a tradition or a discipline within which new books and authors can proliferate. For convenience, we could say that such authors occupy a 'transdiscursive' position.

Homer, Aristotle, and the Church Fathers played this role, as did the first mathematicians and the originators of the Hippocratic tradition. This type of author is surely as old as our civilization. But I believe that the nineteenth century in Europe produced a singular type of author who should not be confused with 'great' literary authors, or the authors of canonical religious texts, and the founders of sciences. Somewhat arbitrarily, we might call them 'initiators of discursive practices'.

The distinctive contribution of these authors is that they produced not only their own work, but the possibility and the rules of formation of other texts. In this sense, their role differs entirely from that of a novelist, for example, who is basically never more than the author of his own text. Freud is not simply the author of *The Interpretation of Dreams* or of *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious* and Marx is not simply the author of the *Communist Manifesto* or *Capital*: they both established the endless possibility of discourse. Obviously, an easy objection can be made. The author of a novel may be responsible for more than his own text; if he acquires some 'importance' in the literary world, his influence can have significant ramifications. To take a very simple example, one could say that Ann Radcliffe did not simply write *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and a few other novels, but also made possible the appearance of Gothic Romances at the beginning of the nineteenth century. To this extent, her function as an author exceeds the limits of her work. However, this objection can be answered by the fact that the possibilities disclosed by the initiators of discursive practices (using the examples of Marx and Freud, whom I believe to be the first and the most important) are significantly different from those suggested by novelists. The novels of Ann Radcliffe put into circulation a certain number of resemblances and analogies patterned on her work – various characteristic signs, figures, relationships, and structures that could be integrated into other books. In short, to say that Ann Radcliffe created the Gothic Romance means that there are certain elements common to her works and to the nineteenth-century Gothic romance: the heroine ruined by her own innocence, the secret fortress that functions as

a counter-city, the outlaw-hero who swears revenge on the world that has cursed him, etc. On the other hand, Marx and Freud, as 'initiators of discursive practices', not only made possible a certain number of analogies that could be adopted by future texts, but, as importantly, they also made possible a certain number of differences. They cleared a space for the introduction of elements other than their own, which, nevertheless, remain within the field of discourse they initiated. In saying that Freud founded psychoanalysis, we do not simply mean that the concept of libido or the techniques of dream analysis reappear in the writings of Karl Abraham or Melanie Klein, but that he made possible a certain number of differences with respect to his books, concepts, and hypotheses, which all arise out of psychoanalytic discourse.

Is this not the case, however, with the founder of any new science or of any author who successfully transforms an existing science? After all, Galileo is indirectly responsible for the texts of those who mechanically applied the laws he formulated, in addition to having paved the way for the production of statements far different from his own. If Cuvier is the founder of biology and Saussure of linguistics, it is not because they were imitated or that an organic concept or a theory of the sign was uncritically integrated into new texts, but because Cuvier, to a certain extent, made possible a theory of evolution diametrically opposed to his own system and because Saussure made possible a generative grammar radically different from his own structural analysis. Superficially, then, the initiation of discursive practices appears similar to the founding of any scientific endeavour, but I believe there is a fundamental difference.

In a scientific programme, the founding act is on an equal footing with its future transformations: it is merely one among the many modifications that it makes possible. This interdependence can take several forms. In the future development of a science, the founding act may appear as little more than a single instance of a more general phenomenon that has been discovered. It might be questioned, in retrospect, for being too intuitive or empirical and submitted to the rigours of new theoretical operations in order to situate it in a formal domain. Finally, it might be thought a hasty generalization whose validity should be restricted. In other words, the founding act of a science can always be rechannelled through the machinery of transformations it has instituted.

On the other hand, the initiation of a discursive practice is heterogeneous to its ulterior transformations. To extend psychoanalytic practice, as initiated by Freud, is not to presume a formal generality that was not claimed at the outset; it is to explore a number of possible applications. To limit it is to isolate in the original texts a small set of propositions or statements that are recognized as having an inaugurative value and that mark other Freudian concepts or theories as derivative. Finally, there are no

26 'false' statements in the work of these initiators; those statements considered inessential or 'prehistoric', in that they are associated with another discourse, are simply neglected in favour of the more pertinent aspects of the work. The initiation of a discursive practice, unlike the founding of a science, overshadows and is necessarily detached from its later developments and transformations. As a consequence, we define the theoretical validity of a statement with respect to the work of the initiator, whereas in the case of Galileo or Newton, it is based on the structural and intrinsic norms established in cosmology or physics. Stated schematically, the work of these initiators is not situated in relation to a science or in the space it defines; rather, it is science or discursive practice that relate to their works as the primary points of reference.

In keeping with this distinction, we can understand why it is inevitable that practitioners of such discourses must 'return to the origin'. Here, as well, it is necessary to distinguish a 'return' from scientific 'rediscoveries' or 'reactivations'. 'Rediscoveries' are the effects of analogy or isomorphism with current forms of knowledge that allow the perception of forgotten or obscured figures. For instance, Chomsky in his book on Cartesian grammar⁴ 'rediscovered' a form of knowledge that had been in use from Cordemoy to Humboldt. It could only be understood from the perspective of generative grammar because this later manifestation held the key to its construction: in effect, a retrospective codification of an historical position. 'Reactivation' refers to something quite different: the insertion of discourse into totally new domains of generalization, practice, and transformations. The history of mathematics abounds in examples of this phenomenon as the work of Michel Serres on mathematical anamnesis show.⁵

The phrase, 'return to', designates a movement with its proper specificity, which characterizes the initiation of discursive practices. If we return, it is because of a basic and constructive omission, an omission that is not the result of accident or incomprehension. In effect, the act of initiation is such, in its essence, that it is inevitably subjected to its own distortions; that which displays this act and derives from it is, at the same time, the root of its divergences and travesties. This non-accidental omission must be regulated by precise operations that can be situated, analysed, and reduced in a return to the act of initiation. The barrier imposed by omission was not added from the outside; it arises from the discursive practice in question, which gives it its law. Both the cause of the barrier and the means for its removal, this omission – also responsible for the obstacles that prevent returning to the act of initiation – can only be resolved by a return. In addition, it is always a return to a text in itself, specifically, to a primary and

4 Noam Chomsky, *Cartesian Linguistics*, New York, 1966.

5 Michel Serres, *La Communication: Hermes I*, Paris, 1968.

unadorned text with particular attention to those things registered in the interstices of the text, its gaps and absences. We return to those empty spaces that have been masked by omission or concealed in a false and misleading plenitude. In these rediscoveries of an essential lack, we find the oscillation of two characteristic responses: 'This point was made – you can't help seeing it if you know how to read'; or, inversely, 'No, that point is not made in any of the printed words in the text, but it is expressed through the words, in their relationships and in the distance that separates them'. It follows naturally that this return, which is a part of the discursive mechanism, constantly introduces modifications and that the return to a text is not a historical supplement that would come to fix itself upon the primary discursivity and redouble it in the form of an ornament which, after all, is not essential. Rather, it is an effective and necessary means of transforming discursive practice. A study of Galileo's works could alter our knowledge of the history, but not the science, of mechanics; whereas, a re-examination of the books of Freud or Marx can transform our understanding of psychoanalysis or Marxism.

A last feature of these returns is that they tend to reinforce the enigmatic link between an author and his works. A text has an inaugurative value precisely because it is the work of a particular author, and our returns are conditioned by this knowledge. The rediscovery of an unknown text by Newton or Cantor will not modify classical cosmology or group theory; at most, it will change our appreciation of their historical genesis. Bringing to light, however, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, to the extent that we recognize it as a book by Freud, can transform not only our historical knowledge, but the field of psychoanalytic theory – if only through a shift of accent or of the centre of gravity. These returns, an important component of discursive practices, form a relationship between 'fundamental' and mediate authors, which is not identical to that which links an ordinary text to its immediate author.

These remarks concerning the initiation of discursive practices have been extremely schematic, especially with regard to the opposition I have tried to trace between this initiation and the founding of sciences. The distinction between the two is not readily discernible; moreover, there is no proof that the two procedures are mutually exclusive. My only purpose in setting up this opposition, however, was to show that the 'author-function', sufficiently complex at the level of a book or a series of texts that bear a definite signature, has other determining factors when analysed in terms of larger entities – groups of works or entire disciplines.

Unfortunately, there is a decided absence of positive propositions in this essay, as it applies to analytic procedures or directions for future research, but I ought at least to give the reasons why I

28 attach such importance to a continuation of this work. Developing a similar analysis could provide the basis for a typology of discourse. A typology of this sort cannot be adequately understood in relation to the grammatical features, formal structures, and objects of discourse, because there undoubtedly exist specific discursive properties or relationships that are irreducible to the rules of grammar and logic and to the laws that govern objects. These properties require investigation if we hope to distinguish the larger categories of discourse. The different forms of relationships (or non-relationships) that an author can assume are evidently one of these discursive properties.

This form of investigation might also permit the introduction of an historical analysis of discourse. Perhaps the time has come to study not only the expressive value and formal transformations of discourse, but its mode of existence: the modifications and variations, within any culture, of modes of circulation, valorization, attribution, and appropriation. Partially at the expense of themes and concepts that an author places in his work, the 'author-function' could also reveal the manner in which discourse is articulated on the basis of social relationships.

Is it not possible to re-examine, as a legitimate extension of this kind of analysis, the privileges of the subject? Clearly, in undertaking an internal and architectonic analysis of a work (whether it be a literary text, a philosophical system, or a scientific work) and in delimiting psychological and biographical references, suspicions arise concerning the absolute nature and creative role of the subject. But the subject should not be entirely abandoned. It should be reconsidered, not to restore the theme of an originating subject, but to seize its functions, its intervention in discourse, and its system of dependencies. We should suspend the typical questions: how does a free subject penetrate the density of things and endow them with meaning; how does it accomplish its design by animating the rules of discourse from within? Rather, we should ask: under what conditions and through what forms can an entity like the subject appear in the order of discourse; what position does it occupy; what functions does it exhibit; and what rules does it follow in each type of discourse? In short, the subject (and its substitutes) must be stripped of its creative role and analysed as a complex and variable function of discourse.

The author – or what I have called the 'author-function' – is undoubtedly only one of the possible specifications of the subject and, considering past historical transformations, it appears that the form, the complexity, and even the existence of this function are far from immutable. We can easily imagine a culture where discourse would circulate without any need for an author. Discourses, whatever their status, form, or value, and regardless of our manner of handling them, would unfold in a pervasive anonymity. No longer the tiresome repetitions: 'Who is the real author?' 'Have

we proof of his authenticity and originality?' 'What has he revealed of his most profound self in his language?' New questions will be heard: 'What are the modes of existence of this discourse?' 'Where does it come from; how is it circulated; who controls it,' 'What placements are determined for possible subjects?' 'Who can fulfill these diverse functions of the subject?' Behind all these questions we would hear little more than the murmur of indifference: 'What matter who's speaking?' 29

Translation by Donald F Bouchard

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Discussion

LUCIEN GOLDMAN Foucault raised a particularly important problem, that is 'who speaks?'; I think one must add another: 'What does he say?' 'Who speaks?': in the human sciences today, the idea of the individual as the final author of a text, especially an important and significant text, seems less and less tenable. Over a number of years a whole series of detailed analyses have indeed shown that, without rejecting the subject or the man, one is compelled to replace the individual subject by a collective or trans-individual one. In my own works I have shown that Racine is not the one and only true author of the Racinian tragedies, but rather that these arose from the development of various ideas shared among the *noblesse de robe* and the Jansenist group, within which Racine was a particularly important individual. These collectively are the 'author' of the tragedies.

As to 'who speaks?' the human sciences today can offer at least two strongly opposing answers, each rejecting the idea of an individual subject. The first, which I shall call non-genetic structuralism, rejects the subject and replaces it with structures (linguistic, mental, social, etc) and only leaves to men and their behaviour the place of a role, a function within these structures which constitute the end point of the research or the explanation. On the contrary genetic structuralism also rejects the individual subject in its historical dimension, which also includes the cultural dimension. Nevertheless, it does not suppress the idea of a subject, rather replaces it with the idea of a trans-individual subject. Far from seeming autonomous and more or less definitive realities, the structures are but one universal property of every practice and human reality. There can be no human deed without structure, no structure without significance; that is, the characteristics of a person's psyche and being fulfill a function. In other words, there are three major theses to this position: there is a subject; this subject is always trans-individual in the cultural and historical dimension; a subject's every psychic activity and every behaviour are always structured and

30 significant, that is functional.

I shall add that I too have encountered one of the difficulties raised by Michel Foucault: that of defining 'works'. Indeed, it is difficult, if not impossible, to define 'works' in relation to an individual subject. As Foucault has said, if one is dealing with Nietzsche or Kant, Racine or Pascal, where does the concept of 'works' end? Should it end with the published texts? Or should one include all the unpublished papers, even the laundry bills? If the question is set within the perspective of genetic structuralism, the answer is valid not only for cultural works but also for all human and historical deeds. What is the French Revolution? What are the fundamental stages in the history of Western capitalist societies and cultures? The answer raises similar difficulties. But let us come back to the 'works': as with all human deeds, its limits are defined by its constituting a signifying structure founded on the existence of a coherent mental structure elaborated by a collective subject. From there it can happen that in order to delineate this structure, one is forced to eliminate certain published texts; finally it goes without saying that one can easily exclude the laundry bill. I shall add that, within this perspective, it is especially important to relate the coherent structure to its function *vis-à-vis* a trans-individual subject – or, to use a less abstract language, to relate the interpretation to the explanation.

I shall mention just one example; in my research I have come up against the problem of deciding to what extent Pascal's *Les Provinciales* and *Les Pensées* could be considered one work. After careful analysis, I have come to the conclusion that this is not the case and that they constitute *two* works by *two* different authors. On the one hand, Pascal with the Arnauld-Nicole group and the moderate Jansenists is the author of *Les Provinciales*; on the other hand, for *Les Pensées* it is Pascal with the extremist Jansenists. Two different authors, who have a partial common property: the individual, Pascal, and maybe a few other Jansenists who followed the same evolution.

Michel Foucault raised another problem in his lecture: that of *écriture*. I think it is better to give this discussion a name, since I expect that we have all been thinking of Derrida and his system. We know that Derrida is attempting (a gamble which I find paradoxical) to elaborate a philosophy of writing, while at the same time denying the existence of the subject. This is all the more curious since this concept of writing is otherwise very close to the dialectical concept of practice. To quote but one example among others: I can only agree with him when he tells us that writing leaves traces which eventually efface themselves; it is the property of every practice, be it the construction of a temple, which disappears after several centuries or millenia, the opening of a road, the altering of its course or, more prosaically, the manufacture of a couple of sausages which are then eaten. But I believe, like Foucault,

that one must ask who creates the traces, who writes.

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Since I have no comments to make on the second part of the lecture, with which I am on the whole in agreement, I shall move on to the third part. It seems to me that here too, most of the problems raised can be answered within the perspective of a trans-individual subject. I shall mention but one: Foucault quite correctly distinguished between what he calls the 'initiators' and the creators of a new scientific methodology. The problem is a real one, but one should not leave it with the relatively complex and obscure character that Foucault gave it in his lecture. Instead, is it not possible to find the epistemological and sociological foundation of this opposition in the distinction, current in modern dialectical thinking, notably the Lukacsian school, between the natural sciences, relatively autonomous scientific structures, and the human sciences, which cannot be positive without being philosophical (the first being founded by the interaction between subject and object, the others on their identity, *in toto* or in part)? Indeed it is no surprise that Foucault has opposed Marx, Freud, and to some extent Durkheim, to Galileo and the founders of mechanical physics. Human sciences – explicitly for Marx and Freud, implicitly for Durkheim – presuppose the close union between evidence and evaluation, between knowledge and the taking up of a position, between theory and practice, of course without in any way jeopardising theoretical rigour. Like Foucault, I think that very often, and especially today, study of Marx, Freud and even Durkheim is presented as a return to the original text, since one is dealing with a return to philosophical thinking; against positivist tendencies which seek to mould human sciences on natural sciences. Furthermore, one must distinguish between what is an authentic 'return' and what, under the guise of 'a return to the sources', is in fact an attempt to assimilate Marx and Freud with positivism and contemporary non-genetic structuralism which are completely foreign to them.

I would like to end my intervention within that perspective by mentioning the now famous sentence, that a student wrote on the blackboard in one of the rooms of the Sorbonne in May 1968 and which seems to me to express the essential aspects of the critique, at once philosophical and scientific, of non-genetic structuralism: 'structures do not take to the streets'; in other words, structures never make history, only men do, even though their action always presents a signifying and structured character.

MICHEL FOUCAULT I shall try to answer. The first thing I shall say is that I, personally, have never used the word 'structure'. Look for it in *The Order of Things* and you will not find it. Therefore, I wish I could be spared all the facile criticisms on structuralism, or else that these could be substantiated. Moreover, I did not say that the author did not exist; I did not say it and I am surprised that my lecture should have led to such a misunderstanding. Let us go over

32 all this again.

I spoke of a certain thread running through works as well as criticism, which, if you like, is that the author must efface himself, or be effaced, in favour of the specific forms of discourse. That being said, I ask the following question: what does the rule, that the author or writer must disappear, allow one to discover? It enables one to discover the play of the 'author-function'. And what I have attempted to analyse, is precisely the way that the 'author-function' operates in what may be called European culture since the seventeenth century. Indeed, I have done so very roughly, in a way that might seem too abstract because it was a matter of giving an overall perspective. You will admit that to define how this function works, under what conditions, in what field, and so on, is not to say that the author does not exist.

The same goes for the negation of man that Goldmann has spoken of: the death of man is a theme which enables one to uncover the way in which the concept of man has operated in Knowledge. And if we go beyond the reading, inevitably austere, of the very first or the very last pages of what I write, one would realise that this statement refers to the analysis of an operation. It is not a matter of stating that man is dead, rather to posit, given the theme – which is not mine and which is being constantly repeated since the end of the nineteenth century – that man is dead (or that he will disappear, or be replaced by the superman), to see how and by what laws the concept of man was formed and has worked. I have done the same for the notion of authorship. Therefore, let us keep our tears back. I would like to make one other comment. It has been said that I have not adopted a scientific perspective. Indeed, I do not pretend to have written a scientific work, but I would like to know how such a reproach has come about.

LUCIEN GOLDMAN When you admit the existence of either man or the subject, do you or do you not reduce them to the status of function?

MICHEL FOUCAULT I did not say that I reduced them to the status of a function; I was analysing the function within which something like an author could exist. Here I have not analysed the subject; I have analysed the author. If I had lectured on the subject, I would probably have analysed the 'subject-function' in the same way, that is I would have analysed the conditions under which it is possible for an individual to fulfil the function of subject. That would still mean that one would have to define in what field the subject is indeed subject, and of what he is the subject (of the discourse, of desire, of the economic process, and so on). An absolute subject does not exist.

JACQUES LACAN Reading [the invitation to this lecture] I noticed in

the last paragraph the formula 'return to'. We may be returning to many things, but please, the 'return' to Freud is something that I took up much like a flag, in a given field, and there I can only thank you, you have done exactly as I had expected. But evoking particularly with reference to Freud, what the 'return to' means, everything you have said, at least given what I have been able to contribute to it, seems to me to be perfectly pertinent. Secondly, I would like to mention that, structuralism or not, I do not think that one is dealing with the negation of the subject anywhere, at least in the field vaguely defined by this label. One is dealing with the dependency of the subject, which is extremely different; and more specifically, with the return to Freud, of the dependency of the subject *vis-à-vis* something really elementary and which we have attempted to isolate under the term of 'signifier'. Thirdly, and I shall restrict my intervention to this, I do not consider that in any way it is legitimate to have written that structures never take to the streets, because, if anything can be demonstrated by the events of May 1968, it is precisely that structures did take to the streets. The fact that it was written in the very place where this taking to the streets happened proves nothing except that, quite simply, what is often and indeed most often internal to what can be called the act, fails to recognize itself.

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Translation by Kari Hanet

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MICHEL FOUCAULT

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On Authorship¹

Sue Clayton and Jonathan Curling

In this article we will try to bring together some recent theoretical developments which bear on the question of authorship, as part of a broader project of specifying the conditions under which independent films operate. We refer to recent work in *Screen* on the 'subject' (in its various uses designating author, audience and film-protagonist) in the context both of particular film-texts and as constituted generally within discourse; to work done on copyright; and to current practices in independent film. We will consider how Foucault's notion of the 'author-function' operates in both cinema and television; the bases on which films and programmes are circulated, and the specific effects of copyright law.

I

The independent film sector has not simply provided film theory with a set of texts on which to perform various critical operations. The manner in which the production, distribution and exhibition of independent cinema is organised foregrounds the strongly differentiated uses of different types of film (and even of the same film). For instance, The Other Cinema distribution catalogue² is organ-

1 This article has been written as a result of meetings held in 1977-8 between some SEFT members and some members of the Independent Film-Makers' Association, in which the use of independent film in schools was discussed, with the general idea of producing materials to accompany these films. At the time it was difficult to resolve what rights and responsibilities film-makers and teachers respectively might have in such an exhibition practice; and the more general problems of authorship took up our attention.

2 The Other Cinema Film Catalogue available from TOC, 12/13 Little Newport Street, London WC2 price £1. Additional catalogue in preparation.

36 ized not around authors or genres but areas of debate on the left. This facilitates the planning of 'seasons' which contextualize the work in a specific way. The effectivity of specific distribution and exhibition practices has been recognized by groups like Cinema Action, whose policy has been to handle its own distribution. The new cinemas being inaugurated in London by Four Corner Films and by Cinema Action are similarly committed to contextualizing the work that is shown, by accompanying screenings with presentations and discussions. Because their practice forces filmmakers to engage with questions about the specificity of audience(s), the effects of funding procedures on the circulation of films and so on, new theoretical work is required to elucidate the ways in which these processes are articulated. Theory which has emphasized the moments of address which surround the showing of a film rather than the film as an object to be studied in the abstract has been formative in this work.³ It must be remembered that in the case of cinematograph and television films it is not only the completed work which is copyrighted but also the performance, or the usage, of that work. Thus it is the Independent Broadcasting Authority rather than the independent television companies who hold the copyright on television *broadcasts*, though copyright on the completed *programme* is held by the television companies.

Similarly, the practice of specifying the constituencies, and the uses, for which rights to commercially exploit works are sold points to the principle of use underlying copyright law. This can be clearly seen from discussions in the Whitford Report⁴ on the use of cable, cassette and satellite to diffuse, play and rebroadcast television programmes. It can be argued that the principle of basing the protection of intellectual labour on the completed work, and the right to make copies of it, is applicable only to a particular form of distribution – that of discrete commodities; attempts to extend that principle to cover broadcasting entail pushing the notion of 'copying' to extremes.⁵ Hence the necessity for the intro-

3 See for example Claire Johnston, *Notes on the Idea of an 'Independent Cinema'* unpublished mimeo paper for SEFT weekend school 1977; IFA 1977 Conference paper on the social practice of cinema, unpublished mimeo, 1977; Mike Dunford and Peter Wollen articles in *Afterimage* n6, 1976. In relation to the industry, see John Ellis's articles 'Made in Ealing', *Screen* Spring 1975, v16 n1, and 'The Institution of Cinema' in *Edinburgh '77 Magazine*, 1977.

4 *Copyright and Designs Law*, Report of the Committee to consider the Law on Copyright and Designs, Chairman the Honourable Mr Justice Whitford, presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Trade, March 1977 (HMSO Cmnd 6732).

5 For example, the purchase of videotape recorders and their use to record programmes off-air does not at present infringe copyright agreements provided that it is only for domestic replay (Whitford para 295) contrary to clause 3 on television licences (Whitford (paras 319-329) recommends that all videorecorders be subject to a levy to cover this usage). If it is for any other usage, copyright law is infringed – unless

duction of the concept of 'performance' into copyright legislation. 37

The theoretical positions that conceive of film as a physical organisation of cellulose acetate, granular silver and ferric oxide, or theorize its formal operation in terms of its materiality, or analyze it simply in terms of the moment of consumption, do not emphasize use in the way we wish to here. The importance of usage in the analysis of film texts has nothing to do with the particular fate of particular films (there are examples of commercial films which can be studied even though they were never released). Rather it stresses that film texts are produced within determinate relations of production and consumption and these relations are a necessary part of any analysis of their functioning. The uses of a text are *necessarily* constituted discursively and cannot be conceived as residing univocally in the materiality of its formal operations. Thus any discourse which is brought to bear on a film text, or indeed on any practice of cinema, constitutes a usage of that text.

II

It is the laws and practices of copyright which guarantee the exchangeability of cultural works as commodities; and it is precisely the commodity nature of such a guarantee, which further conditions the separation of the moments of production and consumption as the main moments of analysis. In so doing, copyright practice proposes a particular model of communication – from the sender, whose work is considered fully embodied in the completed work/product, to be understood when 'consumed' by the reader. Such notions as that of 'address', when theorized in such a way as to imply the determination of meaning by either formalistic or technological operations, are brought into question. So likewise is work based on a notion of audience conceived as unified in its subjectivity.⁶ This is not to suggest that the discursive organisation within a film does not have a reality nor that one should oppose the different subject-positions that make up an audience to the subject positions produced by the film text. What should, however,

a special licence is obtained. The only example of licensed usage at present is the use of videorecorders in schools to record BBC educational programmes (Whitford para 298). Whitford has made substantial recommendations in this area, most notably that the concept of 'fair dealing' (never applicable to films) be replaced by a licensing system.

6 For example, in Annette Kuhn's article 'The Camera I – Observations in Documentary', *Screen*, Summer 1978, v19 n2, the technological address of *cinéma vérité* is assumed, to be undercut by an argument which operates by emphasising the differences between the camera eye, the camera-person's eye, and the viewer's eye, ie by identifying the subjects who produce the text and the reading. But the unified subject positions implied in the analysis must not be taken as conditions of, or conditioned by, the coincidence of these technical and formal operations.

38 be interrogated is the very notion of 'audience' and it should be made clear that a different discursive placing of film-texts (a placing which inevitably involves considerations of distribution) can transform the relations between audience and film on which a particular film works. For example, the placing of a film like *Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair* (1978) in different viewing situations, such as schools, womens' groups, or theatrical cinemas, could influence the critical work done by the different audiences. Not just in the sense that the groups are different, but also in the sense that the same people viewing the film in a different situation would produce different readings according to the sort of cultural and political work done within that other context (because each context has its own differentiated history). It is the discursive engagements produced by the film in different places which is significant, and the significance of each engagement is conditioned by their different histories – and contributes to those histories.

For the commercial cinema, and for any theory which unproblematically accepts the terms of commercial cinema, the audience is always theorized outside particular institutional or political engagements. The independent sector has rightly insisted on challenging this notion of audience and insisting on the importance of different moments of the cycle of film production, rather than an abstract moment of 'viewing'. These considerations raise the problem of deciding what are the determining moments of independent cinema? Are they the points of selection by funding bodies, the moments in film theory and criticism which inform those selections, or moments which rest external to the cinematic institution? The text functions discursively but that functioning is itself dependent on other discourses and practices.

III Independent Cinema and Film Theory

In the past, film-makers have at various times expressed dissatisfaction with the way their films have been taken up by theorists. Their criticisms are generally based on a sense that film theory as it is institutionalised not only removes their films from the area of their conceived effectivity, but also circumscribes the *theoretical* positions that the film-makers themselves can hold, given the use and status of these critical terms within academic discourse. For example, it has been said that the use of the term 'deconstruction' both delimits a film's effectivity to a particular cultural discourse, but yet within that discourse the term operates in too diffuse a fashion.

These criticisms, however, fail to recognize that a notion of *discourse* allows for a more constructive development of theory/practice arguments, dissociating 'theory' from conspiracy, and allowing for the possibility of greater heterogeneity in theoretical writing. By insisting on the term 'discourse' rather than theory,

one refuses to theory an autonomy of its own and insists that it be recognized in its particular order and effects including its institutional sites of utterance.⁷ In particular, theory should neither be identified simply with theoretical journals, for theoretical positions are articulated in the practices of film-makers, nor should it be understood as in some sense 'comprehending', providing a meta-discourse for, the practice of independent film-making. The practices of makers and critics produce different discursive effects which cannot be conceived in terms of the domination of one by the other. However, these discursive effects are crucially regulated, in practice, by particular institutions. When, in 1977, Newsreel Collective failed to receive continuing finance from the BFI Production Board one could see a conflict between two different cultural discourses, each claiming to account for the position of the other. But in this instance the discourse of the film-makers had little purchase on that of the funding body.⁸

These points should indicate that it is not only the theoretical discourses of critics that determine the discourses about film. However, in this paper we are interested in understanding the way in which institutions of film theory affect circulation⁹ in independent cinema. It is because of the operation of notions of authorship that films are so easily transformed into commodities by funding bodies and, ironically, it is because of authorship-functions in critical texts that individual critics can be easily blamed for this. The classifying of films by author-name works to separate and isolate film-makers, rendering invisible the plurality of practices

7 See Colin MacCabe, 'The discursive and the ideological in film – notes on the conditions of political intervention', *Screen* Winter 1978/9, v19 n4.

8 The collective had been funded by the BFI in 1976, producing five films in this first year of production. The rejection in 1977 was justified by the BFI Production Board on two counts: first, because of its general policy of not giving film-makers more than one grant (this point is taken up later in section XIII on State Funding); second, because of Newsreel Collective's 'failure' to intervene in the aesthetics of the Newsreel film. We would want to question this latter approach on the basis that the film text cannot be isolated from its social placing, as this latter contributes crucially to how the film is understood.

9 The term 'circulation' does not refer only to the circulation of a film text, in which usage it might be substituted by the terms 'distribution' and 'exhibition'. Rather, following Foucault, we use it to refer *in addition* to the circulation of cinematic discourses which condition the production, distribution, and exhibition of films. In this way different moments in cinema from those normally designated as the objects of analysis can be differentiated, enabling the analysis of differences between specific cinematic practices to be more adequately elaborated. In particular, the concept questions the sacrosanct treatment that the film text usually receives, without reducing its importance to merely an incidental embellishment of critical ideas. We see the aura surrounding the film text partly as a product of commodity-centred cinema, and in this respect inappropriate to an analysis of the independent sector.

40 (not only films). It is the very naming which marks this isolation and which consequently makes film-makers antagonistic to what they see as a mis-representation of their practices. This applies particularly to 'cultural' funding bodies, when what is at stake is the selling, not of an author-personality, but of a strategically presented cultural/political identity. The insistent contradiction of work so financed is this: that recognition is always accompanied by misrecognition, so that it is both for and against our interests as film-makers to become a 'name'.

It should be noted from the start that the aim of this article is not to propose some abolition of 'authors' and all the accompanying paraphernalia of copyright laws by theoretico-political fiat; we do hope, however, to indicate some of the political and ideological questions which turn around these issues and to emphasize their actuality.

IV Authorship-Subjectivity-Discourse

We have already introduced notions of author-function and author-name. These terms depend on Foucault's analysis in an essay entitled 'What is an Author' [reprinted in this issue of *Screen*]. We are not concerned here with the analysis of the history of authorship in art and literary criticism or with cinematic issues raised by the *politique des auteurs* but rather with the general process by which readers, by means of what Foucault terms 'projections in terms always more or less psychological', construct an author in the text (p 17). Several recent articles in *Screen*, are relevant here; for instance those by Paul Willemsen (Spring 1978 v19 n1) and Ed Branigan (Spring 1978 v19 n1 and Summer 1978 v19 n2) which have asked, albeit in different terms, for a reconsideration of the 'author-subject'. Willemsen's article argues that:

'the reader constructs the author as the other of the image he or she recognizes or accepts as his or hers in relation to the text. As the inscribed reader, like inscribed author, is itself already an imaginary unity, a mapping onto each other of different You's produced by the plurality of discourses that constitute the text, the construction of that unity will differ according to the discourses (knowledges, prejudices, resistance, etc.) brought to bear by given readers on that place. It is in this sense that inscribed subject-positions are never hermetically sealed into a text, but are always positions in ideologies. Texts can resist readings (offer resistances), they can't determine them. They can hinder the productivity of the plurality of discourses at play in them, they can emphasize certain discourses as opposed to others (through repetition or other 'foregrounding' devices)'.

(Willemsen, op cit, pp 62-63)

Willemen, in his analysis of the 'subject', then says that even 41
conceived of 'at its most abstract and impersonal' the subject is
itself 'in history'. He concludes with a quotation from Stephen
Heath:

'The individual is always entering, emerging, as subject in
language . . . at the point of individual/social articulation (the
process *together* in which "a sign represents something for
someone" and "a signifier represents a subject for another
signifier")'.

(*'Screen Images, Film Memory', Edinburgh '76 Magazine 1976*)

The significance of these remarks is twofold. Firstly, they show
how Authorship is related to the processes of reading, and thus to
the processes of the constitution of the individual as subject.
Secondly, they show how the subject is constantly shifted by the
play of signifiers. Since a signifier always operates across different
discourses as well as within particular discourses, the subject is
always plurivocally articulated. It might be said that subjectivity
(ie the positions in discourse that a subject can occupy) is shifted,
not just by the relations between signifiers, but by the relations
between discourses. And since the subject is varyingly shifted by
the varying intensities of such relations, the significance of a film
can be located in the intensity of the relations that articulate its
reading. In other words, a film is significant only insofar as it
mobilises one discourse to produce effects in another; and is taken
up only insofar as it is effective. Since most films, like written texts,
are classified by authors, it is author-names which mark out these
effects. Author-names also have, however, their own effectivity,
conditioning the effects and the circulation of the texts to which
they are attached.¹⁰ Insofar as discourses, then, are constituted
by the circulation of certain texts, it is necessary to study the
relation between their circulation and the author function, the
discourse of authorship, and Authorship.

V Foucault on Authorship

In the essay *'What is an Author'*, Foucault is concerned with the
importance of an author's name as it operates in discourse; and
in particular with its operation in modernist writing, writing 'which
is primarily concerned with creating an opening where the writing

10 As a result of Foucault's analysis it is thought necessary to use a
particular set of terms to discuss authorship. We have tried to use the
following terms: *Author* – The concept of 'author' as used in the dis-
course of authorship; *author-name* – the name used in a classificatory
function; *author* – the individual designated by the author-name (and
occasionally the copyright holder, though this is usually further differ-
entiated); *author-subject* – when it is necessary to specify the author as
subject; in addition *Name* is used when it refers to an *Author*.

42 subject endlessly disappears.' He is concerned with the contradictions involved in the presence (and effects) of the author's name on a mode of literary production which eschews notions of authorship. The resolution that he seeks lies in 'investigating the functional conditions of specific discursive practices.' In such an investigation there is obviously more at issue than the 'projections more or less psychological'. Foucault finds it necessary to treat 'the author' not as an origin of texts, but rather as a function of their circulation. As we have seen the circulation of texts is conditioned in part by their effectivity in particular discourses. Texts can only circulate and thus enter discursive relations at particular historical points. The analysis demands that the status of the author's name and other conditions of entry be known. Only from this position is it possible to understand the operation of the author's name within discourse: for the 'author-name' becomes a function of discourse in general, and discourses in particular. The function of the author-name is to 'characterize the existence, circulation and operation of certain discourses within a society.' What does the name of an author designate? How does it function? Why does it function in this way?

With regard to the *literary* work, to 'only those books or texts with authors', Foucault identifies four different features:

(1) Texts are objects of appropriation, subject to ownership according to procedures inscribed in copyright law and the practices of different publishing companies.

(2) The author function is not universal or constant in all discourses, but nonetheless generally functions to valorize, or validate texts. Foucault points out that this condition of the circulation of texts – the name of the author – is a historically recent development.

(3) The author function is not formed spontaneously through the simple attribution of a discourse to an individual. It results from a complex operation whose purpose is to construct a rational entity we call an 'author'.

'These aspects of an individual that we designate as an author (or which comprise an individual as an author) are projections, in terms always more or less psychological, of our way of handling texts: in the comparisons we make, the traits we extract as pertinent, the conditions we assign, or the exclusions we practice.'

(Foucault p 17)

All these operations vary according to the period and the form of discourse concerned.

(4) The author function in the example of a first person fictional narrative, arises out of the scission between the 'actual writer' and the fictional narrator. Foucault sees that this 'plurality of egos' also operates in other forms of writing, for instance scientific treatises. Within this 'plurality of egos' that of the 'actual writer'

is not seen as determinate. 'On the contrary, the author-function in such discourses operates so as to effect the simultaneous dispersion of [the various] egos.' (Foucault p 19) Thus Foucault's argument rests on the premise that although the author-name may operate as a proper name, designating and referring by way of different descriptions to an author, it also functions in a classificatory way. 43

'Unlike a proper name which moves from the interior of a discourse to the real person outside who produced it, the name of the author remains at the contours of texts – separating one from the other, defining their form, and characterizing their mode of existence (p 15).

Foucault demonstrates how the name of an author is not a proper name by considering among others whether Homer ever existed as a writer of the Homeric texts; or whether the same author was responsible for the texts attributed to the names of Bacon and Shakespeare. In cinema for example, the attribution of a film like *Emmanuelle* to Straub or *Blacks Britannica* to Bertolucci might affect our conception of those authors, and also our readings of the films. The author-name, therefore, is a function of discourse; and the 'author function' refers to the uses of the name in and by discourses. In this classificatory function the author-name cannot be substituted by a possessive adjective eg 'Straub's *Machorka Muff*'; for although in a sense it is operating adjectivally, as in 'Straub's *Othon*' it is, even in this sense, categorizing discursive *properties* of works, and not attributing ownership of those properties to individuals, as when critics have described the Filmwork group's *Justine* as 'Straubian'. Despite its differences from the 'proper name', however, the author-name can also function as a proper name, designating an author eg Jean-Marie Straub and referring by way of different descriptions to the author as subject. Thus the author-names 'Straub' and 'Bertolucci' not only function to classify 'their' films, and the aesthetic and discursive practices associated with them, but also designate two men attributed with certain skills as film directors, whose cultural and political histories are known and talked about, partly because they have become known as Authors, and partly because those histories are thought to affect significantly the filmic techniques which are marked by 'their' names. In this function the author-name *can* be substituted by a possessive adjective and to call *Machorka Muff* 'Straub's film' is in a sense correct. The confusion of the classificatory ('a Straub-film') and designatory ('Straub's film') functions of an author-name is a condition of and is conditioned by, the *possession* of rights in works by authors. Although this designatory function of the author-name is not necessarily relevant to the function of names to mark out the histories of particular discourses, it is both a

44 precondition of the discourse of Authorship, and also of relevance to cultural workers generally: for the circulation of texts to which an author-name is attached also influences the circulation of the author so designated through the institutions of cultural work. It is always a contradiction for those concerned with particular forms of cultural and political work for which author-names are not necessary, and perhaps detrimental, that, to finance their work, they must engage with the designatory function of author names, and the echoing of that function within funding institutions.

How and why do notions of authorship function in cinema and television generally? Two points can be made very briefly:

(1) We suggest that it is necessary for, and a function of, capital to differentiate programmes and films for financial reasons, producing discrete commodities; and that it is a function of the different discourses of criticism to reorganize these commodities. It could be argued, that, as commodities are made increasingly discrete more authors can and will be identified, both within the general flow of, say, television programming, in which case more programmes are authored, and also within each separate programme, as more labour functions are credited, are authored. To mark out one text from another, however, only one author name is necessary; so if we are to understand the confusions made between this function of author-names and the discourse of Author creativity, it is necessary to return to the laws and practices of copyright which guarantee that discourse, and which underlie the ascription of many author-names to text.

(2) The nomination of an institution or an individual as the legal entity in which copyright of a cinema or television text is invested, is, in terms of the labour process involved in its production conditioned by the discourse of Authorship, as well as by the bureaucratic and economic expediency of cultural capital. There are differences between authors in literature and in the visual media, and they cannot superficially be written off as merely generic (involving such questions as whether 'personalities' are authors of their jokes and chat), for in fact they raise new problems and possibilities for any analysis. One is again returned to the crucial question of which *moments* in the circulation of films/programmes to privilege in analysis.

VI Copyright – Author-functions – Cinema

A specific relation of the author-name to the author is maintained by copyright practices and the separate/separable rights and responsibilities subsumed by it. The practices of copyright are not *only* contained within copyright law, but also within the contractual relations established in the practices of different institutions. It is interesting that Whitford draws special attention to the principle of using contracts; in particular to specify the attri-

45
bution of rights in commissioned works and in works produced in employer/employee relations, for in these cases the law is unable to make an adequate and unambiguous attribution of rights (Whitford paras 565-580). Feature film contracts can specify the names, size of title, duration on screen, order of appearance, and yet mark no necessary *legal* title to the work.

The relation of the author-name to an Author, on the other hand, is a function of the way in which texts are classified, criticised, and circulated. In the case of literary texts all three terms can be, and in practice generally are, elided. 'Can be' – due to the singularity (as opposed to plurality) of each; 'in practice are' – first because of the practice of ascribing copyright in literary works to the 'actual writer' (the person who writes the text usually 'rights' it), and second, because the author-name by which copyright is marked is taken over by critical discourse, the author being consecrated as Author. Foucault's work, in isolating these discrete moments, makes it possible to identify their elision historically. At the risk of being repetitive, the moment of copyrighting is seen to be primarily a commercial moment, the act of marking property; while the elevation of authorship to Authorship is seen to be a function of the articulation and rearticulation of texts in discourses, for example, the marking of texts by the name 'Bertolt Brecht' could be said to be a necessary condition of their being published; the position of 'Brecht' as Author within particular discourses definitely affects their circulation. Once these different operations have been identified it becomes easier to attempt the mapping of the author-functions on to the practices of cinema and television.

In the following sections, in mapping out the 'author-functions' on to film and television, we will try to show not only how certain incongruities are posed for theories of authorship and for copyright practices, but also how historically copyright law has come to terms with the dilemmas posed by film and television. If so painstaking an operation needs to be justified, this could surely be done on the grounds that even 'textual' film analysis, whatever other work it is doing, still insists on referring to the director as Author, although the author of the complete film as guaranteed by copyright law is usually the production company, and although many other credits are also given.

In cinema therefore a confusion operates between the 'author-name' by which copyright in a film is marked, the author thereby designated, the author-names designating those who authored separate parts of the production, and the Author by which the text is classified, critically evaluated and circulated. The confusion arises partly because of conflicts which develop between the historical practice, specific to more simple cultural forms, of ascribing copyright to a single author and the system which has developed from that of ascribing multiple rights in compound works such as films, and partly because this dual function of authorship develops

46 with the production company as complete copyright holder as one author, and the Author as another. In 1900, for example, both Bertolucci and Warner Brothers could be identified as authors. Bertolucci is also the Author, the name by which the film is marketed and circulated in critical discourse. The conflict between the two 'authors' Warners and Bertolucci over the final edit of the film, which resulted in the two versions of the film in circulation, arose because of differences in legal interpretation of the rights allowed to both as authors in the original contracts. Whereas in literature the terms are conflated into one name operating in different ways, in cinema different relations between the multiplicity of names, whether designating individuals or production institutions, are possible; and the relations differ according to context. For example, if there is a tendency for contemporary independent films to be collectively produced, and for rights in the films to be collectively owned, this could be achieved by ascribing the copyright to a production group, and then stipulating within the articles of association or incorporation of that group the rights of each member; but if Whitford's recommendation (para 594) were to be enacted, it would also be possible to register all those who worked on the film as joint-authors. The crucial difference is that in the latter case the rights are owned by a transient agglomeration of individuals whose grouping is guaranteed only by joint-authored work; whereas in the former case, the group is legally defined, having thereby a separate institutional existence from any of its members. This difference is crucial because in the former case any one of the joint-authors would be able undemocratically to prevent use of the film, while in the latter case all disputes would be handled by democratic procedures established within the group.

Historically, once the film industry became heavily capitalised, it became expedient for film capital that the individual film was authored by corporate interests – the author-name (copyright holder) came to designate institutions and not individual authors at all. It is precisely this phenomenon that Ben Brewster analyses in his article on Brecht and the Threepenny Opera Case, (*Screen* Winter 1975/76, v16 n4, pp 16-31) documenting how, in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, it became necessary for film capital to identify the filming process itself as creative and thence copyrightable. This would not, however, be a sufficient reason for the director to be identified as the Author responsible for that creativity. A complete analysis demands also an account of the articulation of copyright with the labour process involved in film production. Although it is now axiomatic in the film industry that the producer and the director must exchange contracts according to this dual movement, in the 1930s it was far from automatic. Indeed, Brecht and Weill pushed the court into something close to an admission that the production of films is itself a collective activity and hence incompatible with a system of law based on notions of individual

creativity' (Brewster, *op cit*, p 19). It seems that Brecht himself 47 thought that the whole paraphernalia of rights should disappear, 'since a greater financial burden falls on the manufacturer . . . the whole . . . is a document of the most decisive materialism' (Brewster *ibid* p 22). Brewster comments:

'It is undeniable that the real movement of capitalism has just escaped him, and the general tendency of production in the capitalist film industry has been not the one he foresaw of an increasing proletarianisation and an increasing necessity to recognize the direct creativity of the film apparatus as a whole; on the contrary it has been far more in the other direction towards the increasing recognition of a wider and wider variety of individual creative contributions' (*ibid*, p 23).

While this analysis is basically correct, it should be noted that:

'It ignores the reality of what is in fact a contradictory movement. With such a consolidation of traditional notions of creativity there has occurred a counter movement of institutional development in the cinema over the last thirty years and intensifying over the last ten years (for instance the development of the Co-ops, guerrilla cinema in Latin America, and the work of film collectives in Europe and America since 1968) (Claire Johnston, *op cit*, p 1).

It should of course be added that it is precisely the emergence of this oppositional cinema which enables the labour processes of the dominant film industry and the practices of copyright which underwrite them to be questioned.

VII Television

It is interesting to question at what level/in what way the 'author-functions' operate in television. When cinema is compared with television it appears that cinema is marketed on the basis of discrete performances, whereas television programming is a general flow. Superficially at the financial level there is no immediate way by which television programmes are differentiated in a way that corresponds to the manner in which buying individual books or individual cinema tickets guarantees the discrete status of each book and each film performance. The only ways in which television programmes can at present circulate in a discrete form without breaking copyright laws are as video-cassettes, video-discs, and videotapes sold like records or books over the counter, or recorded off-air within the confines of 'fair-dealing'.¹¹ Since all 'in-house'

11 Under the 1956 Copyright Act 'fair dealing' does not extend to cinematograph films. Thus all recording off-air must be either for private use only, or else be licensed directly from the copyright owner. There is of course some considerable pirating – to the extent that companies in the USA are marketing illegal selections of BBC quite openly, see *Sunday Times*, 8 October 1978.

48 programmes are copyrighted and thus 'authored' by the production company we need to examine in what ways Authors can condition the circulation of programmes.¹²

In a recent book on the economics of television it is stated:

'It is sometimes assumed that television companies are in the business of producing programmes. They are not. They are, in the business of producing audiences – for advertisers.'¹³

While this is not completely accurate in countries which have a public service channel, it does indicate the fact that the licence to broadcast constitutes the major capital asset of broadcasting companies. It also emphasises that the major differences that are recognised by service television are differences in audience ratings, ie differences in the potential consuming power of the audiences for different programmes. It is possible to account, therefore, for the fact that certain labour within television is remunerated on a wage basis and other on a rights basis. That labour which is thought to produce significant difference between television commodities (ie that which significantly influences audience ratings) will *tend* to be remunerated (in addition to a basic fee) on a rights basis; while that which is thought to produce little difference, but which is repetitive, is paid solely on a wage basis. It is the naming of the first type of work as Authorship which marks the concealing of the latter. We use the word *tend* for two reasons; first, because rights only accrue when a programme is reused;¹⁴ second, because of the operation of the credits system which names many of workers to whom rights will not accrue under present conditions.

The operation of the credit system is interesting because while Authorship is necessary for critical and financial reasons, the further differentiation of products by the assembled names of the credit list does not have this function. It is, though, necessary for the circulation of labour within the institutions enabling the assembly of 'named' workers into programme-making groups. This naming of labour, however, brings the discourse of authorship into play, cutting across employer/employee relationships. Named workers can exploit the discourse of authorship to negotiate for authorial

12 Due to the variety of ways in which Authors are constituted in a broad spectrum of programmes, it is difficult to identify directors, actors, or any particular creative role as being generally constituted as Authors. Indeed the circulation of many programmes is determined by content being either explicitly unauthored, or Authored perhaps by the BBC, say, as with the news.

13 'Television Economics', Owen Beebe and Manning – Lexington Books, Lexington USA, 1974.

14 The first usage is of course wage-paid in accordance with the original contract which is always negotiated to cover at least one broadcast of the programme. In UK television it is principally actors who have residuals in television programmes (and repeats).

VIII Copyright History

The first Copyright Act of 1709 was passed principally in response to pressure from the publisher-booksellers (in publishing at the time there was little differentiation into publishers and booksellers); for once the publishing monopoly invested by the Crown in the Stationers' Company had ended, there was nothing to prevent anyone with a bit of capital from copying books. This also militated against the interests of authors, whose contracts with the original publisher were the only means of guaranteeing a return from their work, from the circulation of 'their' texts. The 1709 Act, in apportioning copyright to the author, protected the interests of authors directly, and the interests of capital indirectly, since publishers, by virtue of having capital, were able to demand exclusive contracts from writers whose 'works' they published.

The shift from statutory control of the circulation of texts – by a body appointed by and responsible to the Crown – to a system of control based on individual rights had important repercussions. No longer were texts situated only in what Foucault calls, 'the bipolar field of the sacred and the profane'; they were thenceforth conditioned by the ideologies of the writer and the publishing company, by stamp duties, by market forces, by laws of defamation and libel – thus 'the transgressive properties always intrinsic to the act of writing became the forceful imperative of literature'. In protecting the interests of the publishers a space was created for the freer development of discourses, a freedom based on individual rights and responsibilities. This freedom was marked by the enactment and increasing importance of the laws of defamation and libel.

The name became increasingly significant, for authorship of a work could only be maintained either by physical retention of unpublished material or by putting a name to published material. Although contrary to popular opinion, it is not legally necessary to affirm copyright ownership by marking the work with the author-name and the copyright mark (except under the ruling of the

15 It also depends on the copyright law in the country concerned. See the Annan Report (*Report on the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting* Appendix E, section 2 – Dr J G Blumler 'The Intervention of Television in British Politics', HMSO, Cmnd 6753-I) for a description of the allocation of rights in French and German television. In France especially it is seen to extend significantly to technical production workers who would rarely receive rights in UK television.

Given the tendency towards differentiation of product under conditions of profitability it is interesting to speculate what effects an expanding videocassette market and a 'publisher' Open Broadcasting Authority might have on the circulation of television workers.

50 Universal Copyright Convention (first signed 1952, latest revision 1971 HMSO, Cmnd 5844)), in practice, to avoid litigation, it has become necessary to do so. It has also become necessary to mark the date of authorship to avoid litigation concerning 'originality'. It is for these reasons that authors of screenplays for example deposit copies of their scripts with the Screenwriters' Guild or the Writers' Union. It is thus the named 'work' which becomes the commodity, and it is to the author-name rather than to the author that the rights accrue. The relationship between the author-name and the author is different under different systems of copyright law; but in general, the name takes on its own autonomous existence, being circulated and acquiring value independently of any one particular 'work'. It is from this position that similarities and differences between the concepts 'copyright' and 'author's right' should be examined. In his article 'Film Copyright: Film Culture'¹⁶ Vincent Porter says (*Screen Spring* 1978 v19 n1):

'since copyright has no material existence but is a legal fiction, invented first by the national community and adopted later by the international community to regulate the flow of intellectual works, it has needed its own ideology. There have been two dominant theories legitimising the protection of literary and artistic works – that of copyright, or the right to copy, and that of the author's right' (p 94).

The distinction made between 'material existence' and 'legal fiction' although apposite for Porter's analysis is a problem for us. First, it operates to exclude any analysis of the ways in which the different fictions were produced historically: on the one hand in the discursive practices of authorship which preceded the passing of the 1709 Act in the United Kingdom; on the other in the equivalent practices in Europe. Hence the use of the word 'invented' which invokes the idea of spontaneous appearance. Second, in assuming the separation of theoretical legitimacy from the Acts themselves, and from the discourses which conditioned their production, it also assumes the distinction between material and non-material (intellectual) labour which is precisely the distinction *legally marked* by the relevant acts.¹⁷ Third, in thus analysing the problem *only* from the point of view of labour and capital, it does not engage with other discursive determinations, in particular it denies the possibility of intervention in copyright practices in cases where the opposition labour: capital is not clear, which is the case with independent cinema.

16 In this article some of the implications of the Whitford report on copyright are explored, but in dealing with the likely effects of the proposals on educational practice, the general question of the status and exchangeability of cultural labour is not questioned.

17 Under Anglo-American law the name changes if copyright is sold outright, ie the author, but never the Author, changes.

The existence of the concept of 'moral' right is interesting because it implies a certain amount of editorial autonomy even for those who have sold the right to economic exploitation of their work. Indeed they can 'under reasonable circumstances' (Whitford, para 56) prevent the editing of their work, or the use of it under circumstances which are unacceptable to them.¹⁸ Under Napoleonic law copyright in all complex works is joint-owned – a situation which would be unacceptable to capital which organizes joint-authored works. The process by which the Stockholm Convention sidesteps this problem is analyzed in detail by Vincent Porter in the section entitled 'Who is the author of a film' (Porter, op cit pp 97-99). Essentially the point he makes is that by article 14 bis of the Stockholm Convention, the production company becomes not only a 'copyright holder' but also an author (with moral rights). By the same article the employees of the production company are deprived of all their rights. The United Kingdom is not yet a signatory to the Stockholm Convention. Nevertheless it is necessary to re-examine the parallel situation in the United Kingdom, to question what rights employees have. As has already been said, United Kingdom law is not clear on the subject. Whitford (paras 555-564) states that rights should be subject to negotiation; they therefore depend on the practices of the company or institution which finances the production. It is significant that independent film-makers were able to negotiate control of the editing, of the final edit, and the right to refuse any alteration in the edit, subject to arbitration, with the British Film Institute Production Board, but it is difficult to imagine BBC workers doing the same. It could be said that independent film-makers are not employees of the Production Board, but to say this would imply acceptance of the view that employees have no rights. Similarly, independent film-makers are not *commissioned* by the Production Board though this is closer to the terms of the agreed contract. The Bullock report excluded the media in its proposals for greater worker representation within companies,¹⁹ which indicates that television programmes and newspapers are recognized as importantly different from all other commodities.

The question of moral rights is raised by Vincent Porter in a different but related context. He documents the fact that it is pro-

18 For this reason Whitford assumes that the Napoleonic system of law is more democratic, hence the suggestion that joint authorship should be extended as a principle to cover films (para 584). As we indicated earlier, we think it better that production be organised on the basis of democratic decision-making.

19 See paragraph 8, *Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy*, Chairman Lord Bullock. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Trade January 1977 (HMSO Cmnd 6706).

52 posed by the Whitford commission that, following the creation in European copyright law of the new concept 'copyright-holder' to which moral rights would also be applicable, copyright-holders in the UK should also be allocated moral rights in their works. Porter is concerned with this development insofar as it has important implications for the activities of media-studies and film criticism, for it is implied that production companies may be able to resist the criticism of themselves and their 'works'. On its own this may not be very significant, but taken together with another Whitford proposal that 'fair dealing clauses' for educational institutions should be withdrawn, and that the recording of television programmes off-air should only be possible within institutions which have paid a substantial licence fee, it suggests a considerable impediment to critical activity is implicitly, if not conspiratorially, being established.

To understand this threat it is necessary to examine more fully how television companies are protected against extensive usage of videorecording apparatuses. At present only interim measures have been established. In Germany for example (Whitford, paras 301, 302) the practice is to charge, in the actual price of the hardware, a fee which accrues to special copyright societies to be redistributed to copyright holders registered with them. This system, which Whitford proposes (paras 319-329) should also operate in the UK in addition to the educational licence fee, is necessarily unselective. The fee collected is usually distributed proportionally to the incomes of rights-holders (in much the same way that the Eady Levy accrues automatically to commercially successful producers in the UK film industry). These practices would militate significantly against the interests of independent film-makers. First, they would never receive any of the fee. Second, and more important, educational institutions will be effectively constrained from using independent films for which they would have to pay a hire fee over and above a licence fee which will have made substantial inroads into educational budgets.

X

We have already seen that it is the law of copyright which marks legally and conceptually the separation of intellectual and cultural work from the 'material base on which it is borne'. Thus, at the moment of copyrighting a dual movement is effected. First, the completion of the work is marked, although it remains a potential product until it is used. Second, it is guaranteed that the potential use of the 'work' is fully embodied in it, constituting its exchangeability. In parallel fashion Authorship guarantees that the uses of the 'work' are attributed to the author, whose labour is therefore also exchanged on this basis. But as we also said above, it is precisely the interplay between discourses as they engage in produc-

ing the text that conditions its effectivity. From this position it is not films that are made by film-makers and then circulated, but rather discourses which are seen to condition both the circulation of films and in harness with Authorship, the circulation of film-makers, film critics – indeed all personnel involved in film culture. Our remaining task, therefore, is to analyse how Authorship engages independent cinema, and how this, and other discourses operate through the institutions with which independent cinema engages. 53

XI

Our analysis of copyright cannot tell us precisely in what sphere exchange in a righted work is realized. It is almost by definition only in the commercial sector that sufficient exchange is realized from direct commodity sales to fund cultural workers. In the subsidized sector (nothing is being said about where subsidies come from) by contrast, exchangeability for cultural workers and in particular Authors is guaranteed not so much by economic rights in works, through this is significant, as by an accumulated investment in their status as workers and Authors, and the purchase this gives them over production funds and related cultural work, such as teaching or administration.

The fact that there are over 600 films in the recently published *Directory of Independent British Cinema*²⁰ emphasizes the extent of independent film production activity and the diversity of funding sources. Few of these films have received any critical recognition. Although this could be taken simply to demonstrate a lack of concern among film-makers to get films exhibited, it can be more interestingly taken up to explain why independent films have tended not to develop in terms of discrete commodities. This in turn is partly because many such films have never been engaged by the bureaucratic and legal machineries involved in the distribution of films in commodity form, but it is also consequent upon the frequent practice of programming films in multiple screenings (ie, many of several films in the same programme), whether in an institutional setting such as the London Film-makers Co-op, or on a touring basis such as the 'A Perspective on English Avant-Garde film', circulated by the Arts Council of Great Britain. The fact that the *Directory* lists each film separately, and classifies them by author, is in contrast with the catalogues of *The Other Cinema*, *Liberation Films* and other independent distributors, and marks a new departure in the distribution of independent, and particularly avant-garde, films: It is up to film-makers to discuss whether this is progressive or not; but such a discussion would have to take into account the different histories of avant-garde cinema, and

20 In *Independent Cinema* n1 Bristol 1978, available from 132a Queens Road, Bristol BS8 1LQ.

54 other areas of independent film culture, in particular that sector where aesthetic, institutional, and political concerns are more directly engaged by mainstream practices. For it is to this sector that most critical attention is devoted.

So why is it that the recent history of independent cinema tends to be marked out as a series of BFI Production Board, Arts Council, and Regional Arts Association films? It cannot solely be due to the fact that these films are more professionally made, and are more widely available and therefore more watchable – nor to the fact that funds are made available for the promotion and marketing of these films. It is also due to the centrality of these films to particular critical debates and to what we will call the ‘machinic’ operation of Authorship at every moment in the circulation of independent films within that area designated as *Cinema* to ensure this centrality. We understand the term *machinic* as neither ascribing determinancy of the practice of classifying and evaluating texts by Authors to a specific mode of reading, nor as ascribing determinacy of that mode of reading to the practice of classifying texts by Authors. Instead, both are seen to operate together with economic forces and other discourses inscribed in funding practices. Not only is Authorship inextricably imbricated within filmic discourse generally, but it is also necessarily inscribed in the cinematic institution, and especially in the state funding of productions, on account of the artistic discourses which operate through those institutions which dispense the funds. It is not denied, however, that these artistic discourses have been changed by their engagement with practices which have developed at the side of the cinematic institutions. The funding of collectives, for example, has necessitated the notion of a ‘collective Author’. The Author in this case being recognized not for individual creativity, but because of commitment to particular political and cultural strategies. What is repeated, however, is the idea that the authors are still the Authors of those practices. Human agency is maintained, and in the same way that textual criticism still has a residue of Authorship inscribed in it, if only because it is to be expected that another text by the same Author is likely to have similar aesthetic and political concerns, so Authorship is necessarily inscribed in independent cinema. To the chagrin of some film-makers it operates to ‘fix’ them as the Authors of a particular practice.

If we return to Foucault’s formulation of the author-functions, the mechanics and the politics of these statements will become clearer. While we assumed that author-functions are generally applicable to ‘mass’ and ‘art’ cinema, this cannot be assumed for independent cinema. This is not due only to the fact that the aesthetic strategies of independent cinema are marginal to the conventions of mainstream narrative cinema, but is also a result of the conditions of circulation of independent films. We refer to two particular practices of independent cinema:

(1) Where independent films circulate as 'radical commodities' in the absence of film-makers or their representatives it is generally on the basis of a political engagement (campaign films) or as part of work to forward the understanding of the aesthetics of independent films (IFA Screenings at The Other Cinema, Action Space and elsewhere).

(2) When film-makers accompany their films, acting as their own distributors/exhibitors, it is principally because they can then engage discursively with audiences, resisting the Authorial reading, displacing it into political and aesthetic discourses. Thus although such a practice might appear to emphasize the Authorial reading, and in certain contexts it certainly does – as in art galleries – its validity lies precisely in the way authors being present can argue to disclaim the role of Author, obliging a discussion of the production of the text and so on, at the expense of the unproblematic pleasure of author-Author recognition – as it operates in Art-Artist gallery discussions. Film-maker-plus-film tours as sponsored by the Arts Council are, therefore, a welcome though problematic form of funding for film-makers. On the one hand it is useful to them to have the exhibition of their films supported, but on the other it is necessary to resist the artistic ideology which underwrites such a policy. Indeed this is but a particular example of one of the major contradictions in which independent film-makers are placed, that is being required, on the one hand, to emphasise their Author-ity if they wish to obtain production funding from cultural institutions; but on the other wishing to displace their Authorial position in their political engagements with institutional audiences, for example trades unions and women's groups.

XII Address – Independent Cinema

The effect of these considerations of the address operated by film-makers as well as their films is to emphasize the different ways in which independent film practices engage discourses and the resulting displacement within those discourses. By insisting that notions of 'address' must refer to all moments in a film's circulation, it is necessary to analyse not only the different viewing situations but also the specific discursive engagements within the various institutions which fund independent films. It is the intensity as well as the specificity of these engagements that is crucial to the establishing of perspectives on interventions within institutions.

Two different senses in which it is said that a film can mobilize discourses are usually identified. First, there are those films which operate through different campaigns, already in existence, documenting and underlining their political discourse, enhancing their effectivity in mobilising political struggle (for instance Newsreel's films. Note the use of an Author – Newsreel – to classify not only particular films but also particular cultural and political practices);

56 second, there are films that are involved in struggle with the means of representation, with cinema as a signifying practice – this latter being identified as ‘cultural struggle’. This distinction rests on two presuppositions. First, that it is possible to divorce the analysis of ‘signifying practices’ from other means also necessary for the production of meaning, for example audiences, the organisation of the flow of funds, equipment, and labour power. Second, it assumes that there is a transparency in the representation of political struggle in campaigns – principally that there is an unquestioned presentation of the interests of labour as inherently opposed to capital within a capitalist mode of production. Both assumptions are incorrect. On the one hand, the opposition labour:capital is merely replaced by the opposition *struggle* in culture: *struggle with culture*. On the other hand, the analysis of institutions and the discourses which articulate their practices (we refer both to production institutions and to specific exhibition contexts) necessarily emphasises the constraints which condition the types of films which circulate and how and where they are circulated.

For example, the classification of films into categories such as ‘agit-prop’ and ‘deconstructive’ can be identified as the product of a critical discourse circulated hermetically within cultural institutions. Thus circulated, ‘agit-prop’ films are defined as such because the political discourses with which they engage at the side of these institutions is sealed off, designated as lying outside and, therefore, not pertinent. Their effectivity in being engaged by these cultural discourses lies in being used to exemplify a signifying practice which is transparent, not engaging questions of representation. Agit-prop appears, therefore, as a residual category, necessary to cultural discourse as the negation of affirmative signifying practices. Such a discourse not only misrepresents these areas of independent cinema, but also effectively cuts them off from state funds, defining them as, ‘not of sufficient aesthetic interest’. It is seen, therefore, that address is discursively constituted and integral to the funding moment as well as to the moment of projection. It can never be analysed merely as immanent to the signifying practices of a particular text; at least not without seriously misrepresenting its effectivity.

XIII Independent Film and State Funding

There are at present three means by which state institutions can subsidise the independent film sector: in the form of workshop grants, production grants, and subsidies to already-established distribution and exhibition projects. For reasons which should become clear in the final section of this article, we will wish to begin our analysis from the point, not of production, but of exhibition.

CURRENT EXHIBITION FUNDING State exhibition subsidies, which

come either directly or indirectly from the Arts Council of Great Britain, the British Film Institute and the Regional Arts Associations, are at present very minimal. These bodies recognize the need for centres other than the National and Regional Film Theatres, in view of the latter's overall commitment to fairly prestigious 'art' films – to a kind of viewing situation inappropriate to many independent films. What financial support exists, operates to support: (1) particular exhibition contexts such as the London Film-Makers' Co-op, the Arnolfini in Bristol, the Side in Newcastle. The Other Cinema, now closed, received an initial capital grant from the British Film Institute but an application for deficit financing was turned down; (2) non-theatrical contexts in the formal education sector or weekend schools, which may or may not express a commitment to the *practice* of independent film-makers. (3) particular film-makers who can obtain an exhibition subsidy, such as the 'Artists Tour' subsidised by the Arts Council of Great Britain.

CURRENT DISTRIBUTION FUNDING The only forms of distribution subsidy at present in operation are those made available by Film Availability Services of the BFI, which is partially concerned to deficit-finance European art films that would otherwise not be distributed in the United Kingdom and the service operated by the British Film Institute to distribute Production Board films.

WORKSHOP FUNDING In a sense, workshop funding is clearly more progressive than single production grants, since it recognizes no Authors. However, it is equally clear that small amounts of capital equipment will simply be utilized by those who are in a position to go into production; workshop funding avoids fundamental questions of production let alone the question of a generally agreed wage structure. The question of how to develop a policy in relation to this, is one which is being taken up by film-makers throughout the country. It is part of the broader debate about the extent to which marginalisation from the standard practices of film industry production has fixed the independent sector in a certain relation to other film practices. While historically one could point to aesthetic strategies and so on as being a consequence of a particular (collective) mode of production there are clearly points where the institutionalisation of collective, unpaid work, forecloses other possibilities for the film-maker – the possibility, for instance, of having any standing within the industry as unionised or potentially unionised labour.

PRODUCTION FUNDING As has already been suggested, the principal contradiction for independent film-making is that on the one hand the issues it engages with are primarily discursive and political, while on the other, film-makers are obliged to stand as Directors, as Authors, in order to be recognized by funding bodies. Although

58 this last clause is true right through the cinema industry, its effects are more debilitating in the independent sector, because they undermine, at crucial points, the most progressive uses that can be made of these films.

Given that all three funding bodies currently rely heavily on the 'one-off' production grant, film-makers as a body have had to adopt an overall defensive strategy; resisting attempts to fund different 'categories' of film; side-stepping to some extent the debate about which films should get made in favour of the general principle that all existing independent work should be adequately deficit-financed. In the light of the Annan and Wilson Committee reports, and impending financial legislation, the Independent Film-Makers Association has been active in discussing and proposing possible structures of funding and administration. It seems absolutely clear that economic autonomy is the only basis on which independent film-makers as a constituted group will be able to move on to crucial questions about *which* films they want to see made, and how, and why.

XIV Copyright and Independent Cinema

We have until this point seemingly bypassed the question of copyright in independent cinema, although in a sense it has lain beneath the surface of our analysis. Indeed, we proposed earlier that while copyright is not of direct importance, since historically it is largely assumed that it marks a commercial relationship, its influence is *very* significant, because it underwrites a particular model of authorship and suggests a particular organization of the labour process in cinema. These points are best taken up in relation to the negotiations between the IFA and the BFI Production Board that took place in 1976 and 1977. Some of the issues involved were discussed in an article on the 1977 IFA conference (*Screen* Spring 1977, v18 n1) by Jonathan Curling and Fran McLean written when the final draft of the model contract had not been completed. Very briefly, the position finally agreed was that the film-makers should retain copyright, should be able to allocate distribution rights on a non-exclusive basis, should receive half the revenue after subtraction of marketing costs, and should retain editorial control which would be subject to arbitration in the event of threatened court action. This outcome can be seen in two very different lights; either as a direct infringement on the rights and independence of film-makers – principally the right to full control of and benefits from films they produce; or else as a successful intervention in the practices of ascribing copyright, and the separable economic and editorial rights generally subsumed by it.

The former position is in a sense idealist; but it is an idealism that can only be seen to be based in the history of independent

film-making, in practices funded by film-makers themselves, or funded by institutions such as trades unions with whom editorial and financial decisions would be negotiated on a political basis, rather than on existing commercial precedents. If, on the other hand the latter position is adopted two important principles can and should be recognized. First, that the contract was based on the indisputable fact that a considerable amount of labour goes into producing an independent film (even when it is state-funded) which could never be remunerated on a wage basis by a state institution with limited funds, nor on a rights basis financed out of the revenue realised from a film's exhibition. Film-makers were and are thus perceived as co-producers – consequently also having editorial rights over the film (although in actuality these rights may be somewhat illusory given the entrenched position of particular discourses in funding practices). Second, it is significant that this contract has established a precedent for the future funding of films by state institutions. The first point in particular raises crucial supplementary issues. In allotting editorial control to the film-makers, a shift is made towards worker control of the product, since this right is allocated not on an Authorial basis (giving artists 'moral rights' in their creative products), but on the basis that they are co-producers. Since it is seen, therefore, that economic and editorial rights in state-funded independent films are related to the invisible labour of film-makers on those films, it is deducible that the whole question of rights, as it is generally understood within copyright law, has been displaced. The rights accrue in lieu of wages, rather than as a recognition of either the intellectual creativity of the film-makers, or as a rightful participation in the profits accruing to the production company from the sale of a commercially successful commodity. Thus independent film-workers are part of the collective process of film circulation, and not 'co-earners or sharers in the profits – hence co-rulers economically speaking, but socially already proletaroids', as Brecht described film-industry workers in the *Notes to Mahagonny*.²¹

The question remains, therefore, how far this principle can and should be extended. Given our basic presupposition that film circulation is conditioned by discourse it should be axiomatic that independent film-workers should be waged, rather than remunerated somewhat randomly on a wage/rights mixture. It would solve the problem of casualization and continuity of work, which is endemic to an industry whose labour process in the production grades is basically freelance. A wage system would affect the breaking down of the intellectual/manual, rights/wage distinctions implicit within the industry structure. The gradual shift in this direction marks the successful intervention of independent film-making in the labour process, since the collective strategy of work

21 Quoted by Ben Brewster, *op cit*, p 23.

60 is dedicated to these principles. In a sense, however, this is also a problem, because the creation of an isolated independent film sector would mark us off structurally from colleagues in the film industry. There is of course also the additional problem of deciding who should be waged on what basis. Do we adopt the model of supporting writers in the USSR, ie waging by the number of frames produced, or that of artists in Holland, having our films locked up to be burnt later for lack of warehouse space. This is not the place where these questions can be answered, since they are logically part of the more general question of democratic control of independent film-making which faces the IFA. If such a waging policy ever were adopted it would have to be on the basis of supporting existing practices since this is intrinsic to IFA policy. Indeed, these principles are beginning to be put into practice, not only in the way outlined above, but in workshop funding, and in the principle of supporting the exhibition of films. This last method of support is perhaps the most enlightened of all, for in stimulating the flow of films it can be seen to support distribution and production as well. It also avoids the problems, implicit within production funding, of supporting a particular form of film commodity. The principle should be extended to include the subsidising of institutions such as trades unions and educational establishments to use independent films.

These are all proposals that are being discussed within the IFA, and which have been formally submitted to the Department of Trade to influence forthcoming cinema legislation. If successfully executed they would reduce the power of Authorship as it is circulated within independent cinema, and within the cinematic institution generally; and, even though the complete elimination of Authors from filmic discourse would seem to be an idealist project, given the analyses in earlier sections of this article of the necessity of author-names in cultural criticism, it is a position identifiable within, and immanent to, the processes of contemporary independent cinema. Film-makers know from their cultural practices that analyses based on Authors are not a necessary consequence of authorship; and such analyses would seem to be regressive given the inscription of the human subject in them. For even in criticism in which the author-subject is no longer conceived as the Author of the text, this displacement has generally been effected by emphasizing the production of the viewing subject, ie by substituting the viewer as author for the Author as author. Readings might instead be seen as produced by the engagement of different cultural discourses, conditioned by, and contributing to the histories of those discourses. What in effect is being argued is that the subject ceases to become a privileged term in such an analysis. Also, since it is the circulation of discourses which is significant, rather than the circulation of discrete films, the text would consequently disappear as an isolated or isolable entity.

What is necessary therefore, is work which develops this shift 61
from a subject-centred criticism to a filmic discourse in which the
film text is no longer fetishized as *the* isolated moment of cinematic
pleasure, but in which it is positioned as merely a moment.

red letters

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Triumph of the Will
Notes on Documentary and Spectacle

Steve Neale

Introduction

Triumph of the Will was commissioned by Adolph Hitler on behalf of the Nazi party in Germany as a record and celebration of the 1934 Party Rally in Nuremberg. It was shot by a team of cameramen, soundmen and other technicians under the direction of Leni Riefenstahl and subsequently edited by her. It was premiered in Berlin on 28 March 1935 and was awarded the National Film Prize by Goebbels during the Festival of the Nation in May 1935 and the Diplome de Grand Prix at the Exposition Internationale des Arts et des Techniques in Paris in July. This latter event, in particular, is of significance for the film's later inscription into cinema history. *Triumph of the Will* has often been damned for its political content and for being a Nazi propaganda film. Just as often though, it has been hailed, albeit ambivalently, as a cinematic masterpiece. Neither of these assessments however, has produced a substantial analysis either of the film and its own internal codes and systems or of its conjunctural functioning and effectivity: in all the discussions of the film that I have come across consideration of one of these aspects has come to dominate (or eliminate) consideration of the other. This has evidently a lot to do with a compartmentalisation of art on the one hand and history on the other, but even more crucially it has a lot to do with the lack of any concept of discourse, of any concept of discursive relations or discursive effectivity. In my view, the balance certainly needs to be recast – film and conjuncture need to be integrated more effectively. But a necessary preliminary to this is an examination of the film's textual organisation and discursive systems; it is only from there that conjunctural analyses can proceed. What I aim to do in this article is to initiate such an examination, concentrating in particular on two areas of systematicity – spectacle and looking – which have often rather

64 vaguely been discussed by the film's critics but which have never been analysed thoroughly at all. In so doing, I shall proceed initially by interrogating some of the terms and concepts deployed by these critics. This article, then, is neither an ideological reading of the film, nor an analysis of its conjunctural positioning. It is rather an analysis of some of the major conditions necessary for both.

I

'In short, *Triumph of the Will*, like *Birth of a Nation*, embodies an overwhelming contradiction: it is cinematically dazzling and ideologically vicious.' (Richard Meran Barsam, *Filmguide to Triumph of the Will*, Indiana University Press, 1975, pp 17-18.)

This quotation is typical of most critical comment on *Triumph of the Will*. It is damned for its 'ideology' on the one hand and praised for its cinematic artistry on the other. Hence:

'Two conclusions cannot escape anyone seeing *Triumph of the Will*; it could never have been made by anyone not fanatically at one with the events depicted, nor equally could it have been made by anyone not profoundly encompassed by the medium.' (David Gurston, 'Leni Riefenstahl', *Film Quarterly*, v XIV n 1, Fall 1960, p 15.)

'Some viewers may question the sincerity of the mass emotion expressed at the rallies, or find themselves alienated by the party rhetoric, but most agree on the cinematic power of the film. Ultimately, the modern audience is stunned both by the film's artistic power and by its political content.' (Barsam, op cit, p 27.)

'As there is terror in *Triumph of the Will* when one thinks of what the production helped stabilize and bring about, there is also the stamp and invisible signature of authentic genius.' (Marshall Lewis, '*Triumph of the Will*', *Film Comment*, v 3 n 1, Winter 1965, p 23.)

In structuring these two aspects of the film as a 'contradiction', this kind of criticism is able both to separate one aspect from another (cinematic power is different from ideology; they are separate in themselves and can thus be separately discussed), and yet simultaneously to hold them together in a notion of contradiction that in effect differs little from notions like 'paradox' or 'ambiguity' – terms which, in traditional criticism of the arts, serve less as analytical concepts than as marks of confusion or, even, of quality.

Despite the separation, however, the nature of 'the cinematic power' of *Triumph of the Will* is never subject to detailed discussion. It is recognised. It is also celebrated. But its specificity, its systematicity and its effects are never fully analysed. One of the reasons for devoting attention to the film lies, therefore, not only in the need to pull the terms 'cinema' and 'ideology' back together

but also in the need for some kind of initial analysis of its cinematicity: what is it that these critics find so overwhelming and so deserving of praise – despite their liberal consciences? Why – and how – is the film so ‘cinematically dazzling’?

There is another reason too, one which is ultimately and intimately related, in my opinion, to these kinds of questions, though it is one which is admittedly rather more speculatively based. It derives from a juxtaposition of a series of related conceptions of film, documentary and propaganda, a juxtaposition which is not in fact explicitly made or explicitly recognized by the critics of *Triumph of the Will* (perhaps for symptomatic reasons) but one which, once it is made, generates a number of interesting and important contradictions, centring in particular on notions about (and definitions of) the relationship between documentary, cinema and vision. Before discussing this more fully, I want to spend some time in looking at the opening section of the film and in examining in particular the inscription of a twin system of spectacle and looking. Since in my view it is these elements which give the film both its cinematic *and* its ideological power. They also simultaneously, provide the terms and the basis needed to discuss the kinds of contradiction I have in mind.

The opening section of *Triumph of the Will*, lasting some 10½ minutes and comprising 113 shots overall (discounting titles and credits) can be subdivided into three main segments, as follows: (1) The flight into Nuremberg and the landing of Hitler's aircraft. (2) The motorcade. (3) The arrival at the hotel. As will become evident, this segmentation derives not only from diegetic criteria (criteria involving the specification of the spatio-temporal unity of events), but also from distinct stages in the inscription and/or the re-marking of the systems of spectacle and looking that traverses the film overall.

The first of the shots in this section consists of a view through the cockpit window of the aircraft, panning slowly left as the aircraft moves forward (figure 1). This is followed by eight more



66 shots from the plane, each of them focused on different aspects/moments of the cloud formation visible from the aircraft window, and each of them, at one point or another, including within the frame visible evidence of the presence of the aircraft itself.

The imbrications of framing, composition, movement and clouds in these opening shots function to install *spectacle* as the principle of the film's operations. That is to say a signifying system is installed whose basis lies in a specific form of the evocation and satiation of the scopic drive, a system which is especially concerned both to stress, to *display*, the visibility of the visible, and to produce, as far as is possible, an elision between the look of the spectating subject and the look of the other across the instance of the visual field of the image¹ through the mobilisation of precisely those of particular codes of spatial scale (monumentality and extreme contrast); of light (*chiaroscuro* or extremes of luminosity); of elaborate and/or (heavily marked-displayed) composition,² and so on.

1 For an elaboration of the concept of the look see Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Hogarth Press, London 1977, pp 67-119; Stephen Heath, 'Anata Mo', *Screen* v17 n4, Winter 1976/7, pp 55-56 and 62-63; and Constance Penley, 'The Avant-Garde and its Imaginary', *Camera Obscura* n2, pp 21-23:

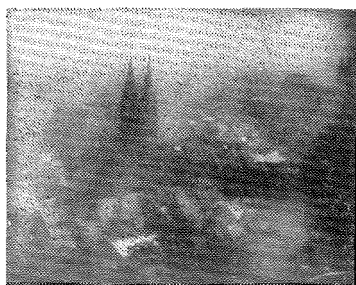
'Thus Lacan can say, in relation to the domain of vision integrated into the field of desire: "In the dialectic of the eye and the look, there is no point of coincidence, only basic lure." . . . The look is not at all a look that can be seen, it is a look imagined by the subject in the field of the other: the look concerned here is very much the presence of the other as such. That is, the determinant look is not our own (the phenomenological notion of the intentionality of perception, and the subject as master of the visual field) but the one from outside; this look pre-exists the subject in the same way that the symbolic and the 'real' pre-exist the subject's constitution through the imaginary. We think of ourselves as the subject of representation but within the always reciprocal (yet not symmetrical) structure of the look we are, virtually, the object of representation also. Lacan even speaks of the subject being 'photo-graphed' by the incarnated and returned light of its own look . . . There is, then, something in vision nowhere mastered by the subject: the look of the other pre-exists the subject's look; the subject's visual field is always organized in relation to the other's look that it is not (what Lacan calls the 'blot' (*la tache*)); the relation of the look to what one wants to see is always a relation of lure. Certainly the subject here is not an objective subject, nor the one of reflecting consciousness, but the subject of desire.'

2 This is the significance and context of Victor Burgin's remarks on composition and monocular perspective in photography: 'The awkwardness which accompanies the over-long contemplation of a photograph arises from a consciousness of the monocular perspective system of representation as systematic deception. The lens arranges all information according to laws of projection which place the subject as geometric point of origin of the scene in an imaginary relationship with real space, but facts intrude to deconstruct the initial response: the eye/(I) cannot move within the depicted space (which offers itself precisely to such movement), it can only move *across* it to the points where it encounters the frame. The subject's inevitable recognition of the *rule* of the frame may, however, be postponed by a variety of strategies which include

All these forms of codification are designed to exhibit the image for the gaze of the spectator and for the scopic drive that sustains it, designed, precisely, to 'catch' (to lure) the eye. The cloud formations in particular here are both important and indicative. As Hubert Damisch has argued in his book *Théorie du nuage* (Paris 1972) clouds have been an essential ingredient in the whole apparatus of spectacle in European art. In offering to the spectator's gaze a set of forms which mask and fill an otherwise empty and potentially infinite space (the sky) while simultaneously signifying the very emptiness and infinity that they mask, clouds have come to function, in a sense, to signify spectacle itself. This double functioning illustrates particularly well the contradiction that spectacle involves. The traces of the cockpit in the image have an interesting significance and role in relation to this. If the spectating subject is inscribed, via the spectacle of the cloud formations, in interrelationship with an easily flowing and effortless series of movements (both of the aircraft and of the panning camera within it) – the gaze able almost to encompass the infinite, such is its position of visual privilege – the traces I am referring to function so as to *circumscribe* its apparently limitless power, to indicate and demarcate its limits. They are, in this sense, almost overtly indicative of the flaw at the heart of the scopic drive, of the insistence of the other in the visual field, of the impossibility of the very position of visual mastery inscribed in the other codes that organize the sequence. In *representing* these limits, these traces themselves function to fill the lack. In their very repetition they stabilize as unproblematically signified elements of the diegesis, coming simply to represent the presence of the aircraft itself. Moreover, in coming so close to (yet so far from) the flaw in the scopic drive, the film can all the more effectively engage the drive's dynamic – pulling the subject into the metonymic flow of the spectacle across fluctuating instances of 'imperfect' vision which – precisely because of the 'imperfection' – can promise the impossible plenitude elsewhere provided by the plentiful instances of unblemished spectacle that soon come to fill the film.

In shot 9, the aircraft's forward movement through the clouds and down towards Nuremberg marks the first point of re-orientation of the film's visual system. As the plane descends, the clouds

"compositional" devices for moving the eye from the framing edge. "Good composition" may therefore be no more or less than a set of devices for prolonging our imaginary command of the point-of-view, our *self-assertion*; a device for retarding recognition of the autonomy of the frame, and the authority of the *other* it signifies.' ('Looking at Photographs', *Screen Education* n 24, Autumn 1977, pp 23-24). The 'authority of the other' here is linked precisely to the issue of the mastery, by the spectating subject, of the visual field of the image. The *intrusion* of the frame is the mark of the lack of that mastery.



2

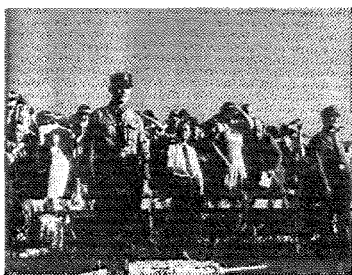
appear to dissolve, to draw apart like a stage-curtain,³ to reveal the aerial spectacle of the city itself, spread out below for our gaze (figure 2). Four more shots, each repeating an arc-like movement around a particular building or monument, re-mark the instance of spectacle across its new diegetic space before, in shot 14, there occurs a view of the plane itself, a view which pulls the fragments and traces previously visible (and vaguely troubling) into the plentitude of the image and its composed visual field. In so doing it not only fully stabilizes, in retrospect, those previous fragments and traces, it also fully establishes that the register and position of the gaze of the spectator is one of privileged mastery, now detached from and transcending any specific, identifiable and circumscribed place. The gaze is now inscribed as limitless, and is specifically re-inscribed as such in the following (famous) shot in which the

3 Theatricality – in all its artifice – is crucial to the particular mode of spectacle I am referring to here, a mode whose traditions stem from, and are exemplified by, Baroque painting, theatre and opera. Centring in particular on the stage itself (the designated site of exhibition and display) and on the stage-curtain (ie that which is lifted to show the display – and that which therefore functions, importantly, as the mark *par-excellence* of the lure of spectacle itself), it is a mode which seems to involve an oscillating play between not only the exhibition of a visual illusion or effect as such, but also the exhibition of the means – the tricks – used to produce it. An awareness of artifice therefore, at some point, seems to be essential to the overall effect: 'The point is not that painting gives an illusory equivalence to the object even if Plato [in his protests against it] seems to be saying this. The point is that the *trompe-l'oeil* of painting pretends to be something other than what it is.

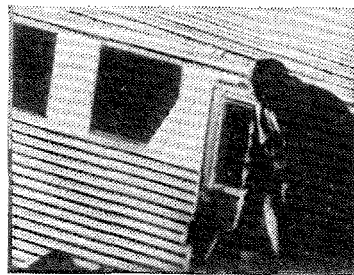
What is it that attracts and satisfies us in *trompe-l'oeil*? When is it that it captures our attention and delights us? At the moment when, by a mere shift of our gaze, we are able to realize that the representation does not move with the gaze and that it is merely a *trompe-l'oeil*. For it appears at that moment as something other than it seemed, or rather it now seems to be that something else. The picture does not compete with appearance, it competes with what Plato designates for us beyond appearance as being the Idea. It is because the picture is the appearance that says it is that which gives the appearance that Plato attacks painting, as if it were an activity competing with his own,' (Lacan, op cit, p 112).

plane's shadow passes over the street and its parading troops. The plane's diegetic presence is re-marked while the spectator's gaze (above the crowd, above the city, comprehending both the plane and its shadow) is re-inscribed in its position of all-encompassing mastery – all the more so in a shot whose strikingly contrived, composed, almost especially arranged, effect functions precisely to catch the eye.

The following sequence of shots (15-23), alternating views of the plane in flight as it comes in to land with successively closer shots of the city and its parading troops and massed crowds (and thereby folding the one into the other, integrating the two into a common diegetic space itself heavily marked by the instance of spectacle (the troops on parade)), leads on to a shot (shot 23, figure 3) which initiates a system of looking that runs throughout the remainder of the film and that dominates its visual articulation. This shot consists, simply, of a crowd gathered behind two Nazi guards



3



4

gazing up and out of frame right (ie watching the arrival and landing of the plane). It is at this point that the activity of looking is inscribed into the diegesis itself, and that its privileged object begins to be established. Thirteen shots later – a delay that functions emphatically to mark its importance – the anticipated object of the look, the figure of Adolph Hitler, comes initially into view (shot 36, figure 4). In other words, the first clearly identifiable (seeable) instance of intra-diegetic looking is co-incident with the initial appearance of Hitler, with the latter as that which gratifies the former, filling the space implied by the eye-line in shot 23, completing the visual and dramatic impetus of the sequence as a whole.

This initial segment closes, importantly and significantly, with a sequence of shots which firmly establish that the *political* relationship between the crowd and Hitler, as signified in the film, is one, precisely, that hinges on looking: Hitler's status in the film derives from, and is motivated and signalled by, the fact that he is structured and marked as the privileged object of the gaze, that

70 he himself is the ultimately significant spectacle – for the crowds in the film and for the spectators of the film. Hence the significance of shot 41. Here, Hitler is framed in close-up, returning the gaze of the saluting crowd and, thus, acknowledging his visual as well as his political function. It is the spectator's look which joins the two spaces (that of the crowd and that of Hitler) and the two instances of looking together.

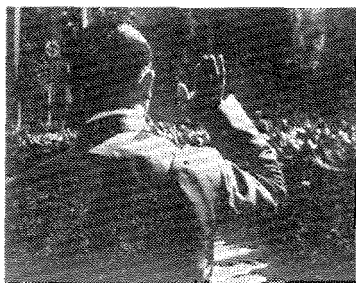
From here the film moves into its next segment, the street cavalcade, a segment which serves above all to re-mark and to emphasize Hitler's function *vis-à-vis* the intra-diegetic crowd, the filmic spectator and the system of spectacle which it anchors. Consisting largely of a series of alternating shots of the crowds watching and saluting and of Hitler standing in his car (occasionally but significantly punctuated by more distant views encompassing both instances – continuing the inscription of spectacle in its mode as spatial scale in conjunction with a mastering distance of gaze), it insists over and over again not only upon the activity of looking as the basis of the relations between the actants the sequence signifies, but also upon looking as the key term in the articulation of its own internal consistency: in a manner very similar to that of classical 'fictional' cinema. The sequence under discussion here depends absolutely for its clarity and intelligibility upon a non-contradictory articulation of intra-diegetic looks across the look of the camera and the spectator; given the absence of a plot, and given the absence of dialogue and commentary, the role of this relay of looks in the provision of a position of intelligibility for the spectator and in the location of events in a clear spatio-temporal milieu is all the more heavily weighted. (The striking instances of a 'play' with looking and its cinematic articulation in this segment – as for instance in the 'exchange of looks' between Hitler and a cat (shots 78-80) and in the apparently animated looking of a statue (shot 67) – indicative of this weight and of the ease with which it is borne; an index of its 'artistry' and 'style'.)

As regards the functioning and importance of the figure of Hitler with respect to the relay of looks and the film's system of spectacle, two aspects of the segment under discussion are especially interesting and significant. The first might appear 'accidental' from a purely technical point of view, but its recurrent insistence throughout the segment suggests that it is symptomatically crucial. The first shot in the segment as a whole is a moving high angle shot of Hitler's car driving toward the camera along a crowd-lined road: all the functionally important components in the segment thus assembled for the encompassing gaze of the spectator. The second shot, taken, it would seem, from the car itself, shows only the saluting crowd. The third shot (shot 45) is taken from a camera placed head-on in front of the car, its driver on the right, the standing and saluting figure of Hitler on the left. During the course of the shot, as the car moves forward and the camera back, the

camera pans right towards the crowd lining the street, so that Hitler actually moves out of frame. This is the first of a number of shots in which Hitler dominates the frame only subsequently to be lost from it, usually as a result of camera movement. Shot 55, for instance, is a close-up of Hitler taken from behind, the crowd visible in banks to the right. The camera here, again, pans right toward the crowd and Hitler moves out of view. In shot 58, again framed from behind Hitler's head, but this time with the camera tilted upward slightly to include within the image figures on a flag-lined bridge, the effect is achieved by a further tilting of the camera to hold the bridge in frame as the car moves forward. In shot 61 Hitler does not, in fact, move out of frame at all. Instead, he is lost in darkness as the car passes under the bridge. It moves back into light (and vision) as the car emerges at the other side. Finally, in shot 89, taken from the side of the car as it moves left, the camera tracks past Hitler, slows down to re-frame him from a closer position and then, finally, moves past him again to focus on the crowds behind him.

Each of these instances articulates the primary elements structured by the segment as a whole — Hitler and the crowd. Given the relay of looks that holds these elements together coherently, and given Hitler's role in anchoring that relay, their significance lies in the way in which they vary that articulation, and, especially, in the way in which they institute an oscillating play with Hitler's presence in/absence from the frame. Thus the first of these instances is preceded and followed by shots of the crowd alone, its gaze in a sense functioning to re-mark Hitler's absence from the spectator's visual field. He returns, however, centrally and dominantly framed, two shots later. And this tends to be the pattern throughout. In other words, given the variations (and these are important in contributing to that sense of style and visual dynamism noted by the film's critics), the oscillation between Hitler on the one hand and the crowd on the other is articulated across an oscillation between Hitler's presence in/absence from the frame in such a way as insistently to highlight his function as privileged object of the look and as a principle of visual orientation and coherence.

The second feature of this segment to which I want to draw attention concerns four particular shots (47, 59, 61 and 85). In each of these shots Hitler's body is, in one way or another, specifically marked by a lighting effect, and in each case the effect serves, to highlight Hitler as object of the look. As with the presence/absence oscillation discussed above, each instance is subject to some variation: in the first the light is marked, almost like a halo, on Hitler's head; in the second it is marked on his head and shoulders (shot 59, figure 5); in the third it is that into which he enters after passing into the darkness under the bridge, while in the fourth, again, the focus is Hitler's head. In each case, the shots in question occur after a sequence from which Hitler's figure has been absent

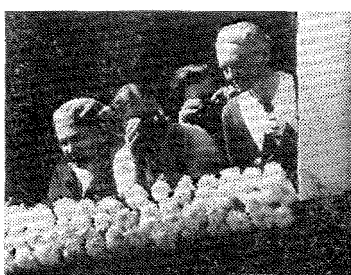


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(shot 59 being slightly different in that it is one of the instances of oscillation noted above). In fact there is only one example throughout the whole segment in which Hitler's body remains unmarked after an absence of three or more shots, and this, occurring as it does during the sequence in which he is presented with flowers by a little girl, is a very particular case. Indeed, it might be maintained that sequence as a whole performs an analogous marking function, especially as the three shots that do occur during Hitler's absence from the screen are each individualised images of girls watching and smiling at the apparently impromptu ceremony. It should be noted, incidentally that there are other instances of 'play' with the cinematic articulation of looks in the film apart from those involving the cat and the statue. I have in mind, in particular, a sequence during the final street parade in which three differently angled shots of marching troops are linked together through a matching of eye-lines produced by interleaving them in sequence in the editing with a medium shot of a group of people watching from a window – two gazing off to the left and two, through binoculars, to the right – and with a medium close-up of Hitler who initially is gazing out of screen left and who then turns to gaze out of frame right, thus producing, on top of the matching of eye-lines, a visual rhyme which serves to bind the

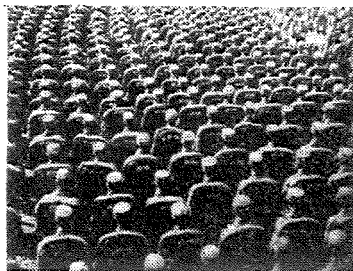


6



7

sequence together all the more tightly (figures 6-11) – and all the more stylishly, so also are there other instances in which Hitler's body is marked as object of the look by a particular effect of light. Indeed, this is one of the film's most insistent, most evident and most important figures. Examples occur, in particular, and for obvious reasons, during the night sequences in the Nuremberg 73



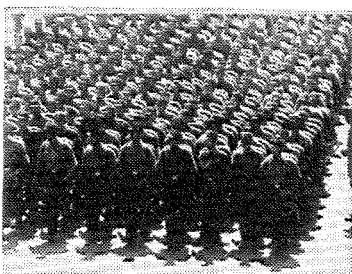
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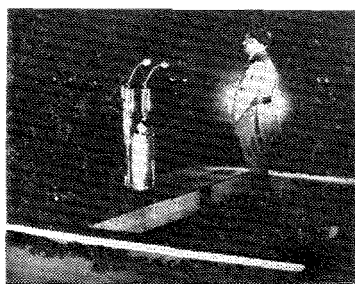


10



11

stadium and the congress hall (see figures 12, 13 and 14): one of the primary functions of the motorcade segment, therefore, can be seen to be that of initiating the inscription of this figure in the context, overall, of the marking of Hitler as the basis and centre



12



13



14

of its system of spectacle.

The last segment I wish to discuss centres on the arrival of Hitler at his hotel. It represents the culmination not only of an ongoing diegetic action – that which might loosely and simply be termed ‘the arrival of Hitler in Nuremberg’ – but also of the initial inscription of those systems of spectacle and looking that traverse the film as a whole – giving it the visual unity that its critics find so overwhelmingly powerful and so worthy of praise.

Two moments in particular are of significance here. Firstly, following a sequence in which Hitler’s car drives to halt outside the hotel, initially taken in a series of high-angle long-shots (which, throughout, have functioned simultaneously to turn the events they focus into a ‘composed’ and complete visual scene, laying out its components for an all-encompassing and all-comprehending spectatorial gaze) and following his descent from the car, there occurs both one of those instances of a play with cinematic looking referred to above and, in the midst of this, an instance of the marking of Hitler’s body by light.

The play with looking is particularly interesting in that it serves, like the other instances in the film, to highlight both the activity of looking in itself, and the skill with which it is here articulated cinematically, while, in the particular context of the segment, opening a kind of sub-system of visual suspense, refusing to close-off the spatial organization of the scene by refusing any final spatial coherence in its matching of diegetic looks. The sequence runs as follows: shot 94 shows a close-view of a section of the crowd looking at Hitler and waving. Shot 95 (figure 12 the shot in which Hitler is ‘halo’d’ by light) shows a close view of Hitler gazing to the right (away from the crowd as shown in the previous shot). Shot 96 returns to the crowd. Shot 97 returns to Hitler, shot 98 to the crowd. Shot 99 shows Hitler turning his head and gazing off to the right of the camera, while, finally, shot 100 shows a close-up of a helmeted soldier. Like Hitler he is turning his head left, but here the head (and the gaze) are directed right round, and out of frame left. The various gazes, then, do not fully match one another,

do not overlap and intersect with one another sufficiently either to define an enclosed and self-sufficient space or, therefore, to complete the scene they articulate. Because of this the sequence is dynamised, kept open, but the terms and conditions for its eventual closure have been set: a series of looks have eventually to be bound together into the spatial coherence of a scene; moreover, they have to articulate together in such a way that Hitler has to be placed at the point of their intersection – almost literally at the centre of the scene.

It is this that is achieved in the final sequence of shots. Having entered the hotel, 5 shots (shots 106-110) follow of the watching, waiting and saluting crowd. In each case, the gazes of the members of the crowd are directed out of frame right, a repetitious insistence which articulates an overwhelming 'demand', so to speak, for the implied but absent space those gazes define to be filled in, for the object of the gazes to be shown, for the gazes to be returned and for the scene thus to be completed and closed off. Shot 111 begins to fill the gap. Beginning with a close-up of a flag near one of the hotel windows, the camera moves left to frame the window itself, with the sign 'Heil Hitler' plainly visible, indeed displayed, beneath it. But the gap is still not quite filled. In fact, it is itself signified precisely by the empty window frame. It is then at the end of the shot, that Hitler begins to appear. As he comes into view, however, we cut back to a shot of the crowd – again gazing off-screen right, the delay simply emphasizing the lack in a suspense of looking. Then, at last, we return to Hitler, finally centrally and dominantly framed in the window, marked as such for the gaze of the crowd and the spectator (shot 113, figure 15). He looks firstly



15

to the right and then to the left, acknowledging the look of the crowd and completing the spatial articulation of the scene. Spectacle is marked here in the artifice of the double frame (ie the frame of the window as well as the frame of the image) and in the strong suggestions of theatricality evident in the disposition of the scene (Hitler at the window, elevated above the crowd as if on a mini-stage). Two more shots of the crowd and then we return,

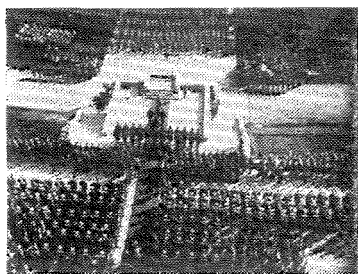
76 for the last shot of this opening section of the film, to Hitler at the window. His arms are outstretched on the window-sill and his gaze is directed out of frame right, a gaze which, unspecified as to its object, serves less to suggest a concrete off-screen space than to indicate a state, almost of reverie. Thus it re-marks Hitler's function as spectacle, as object of the look: he seems to turn his head not in order to look at something specific, but in order that the gaze itself can be properly and fully looked at, undisturbed by any possibility of its being caught within a specific action or event, which would direct our attention and our gaze away, or absorb it into a function conflicting with the one that it in fact performs, soliciting the look of the spectating subject.

II

From the preceding analysis a number of points about the terms set by the opening section of *Triumph of the Will* have emerged, terms which are taken up, re-stated and elaborated during the remainder of the film, and which go some way toward specifying what its critics mean when they speak of 'artistic power' and 'authentic genius' and use terms like 'cinematically dazzling'. The terms – clearly – are 'spectacle' and 'looking'. The former emerges as a precise system for emphatically engaging the scopic drive and filling it with satisfying images (with 'emphatically' here as indicative not only of an unequivocality, but also of the very figure – hyperbole – which predominantly systematizes the various visual codes involved). Hence the fact that nearly all of the film's scenes and sequences are constituted – diegetically – as displays: the folk parade, the cavalry parade, the Youth and Labour Rallies, the Storm Troopers Rally, the ceremony for the war dead and so on. These displays are then re-marked as *cinematic* displays, as cinematic spectacle, by the visual codes deployed and of course, in particular, by the structure of looks and the emphasis this is given. Looking, therefore, the second term, is not only the foundation of spectacle in its relations with the spectating subject, it is also the means by which the film coheres as a film – linking the images together and to a large extent specifying their meaning. The film articulates these two terms in a particular way, such that each becomes the support and function of the other, the two held together in a dynamic balance which both lures and entertains the scopic drive, and such that a very classical rhythm and economy sustains its visual effects, regulating according to a mode of dynamised homogeneity that thus becomes the sign of that very mode of cinematic artistry celebrated by the critics, particularly insofar as they function to display, as it were, the film itself, insofar as they function as *style*.

Hence the importance and significance of those instances of play with the cinematic articulation of looks pointed to above –

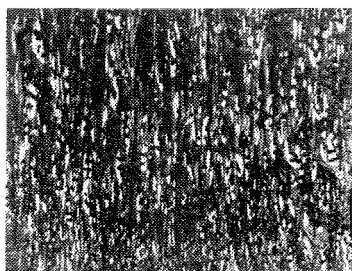
the film, at points like these, displays its own processes of articulation enough to firmly inscribe a sense of style in its basic systems and structures, while nevertheless containing them precisely as style, as a mode of unity of those system and structures rather than as a mode of heterogeneity that cuts *against* them, pulling them out of their function as structures of identification. 77



1'



2'



3'



4'

The classicism, as well as the particularity, of the film's rhythm and economy can be indicated by discussing in the light of Bellour's analysis of a sequence from *The Big Sleep* ('The Obvious and the Code', *Screen* v15 n4, Winter 1974/5) a sequence that occurs after the opening section, during the ceremony for the war dead in the Nuremberg stadium. The sequence centres diegetically on Hitler's speech after the laying of wreaths at the monument, and comprises overall some 21 shots in sequence as follows:

- 1' Very high angled long shot of the podium from which Hitler speaks in its setting of regimented soldiers and crowd.
- 2' Long shot, taken from a low angle, of Hitler at the podium, with a figure included on the right hand side of the frame.
- 3' Massed flags being carried forward by troops.
- 4' Very high angled long shot of troops marching.

78



5'



6'



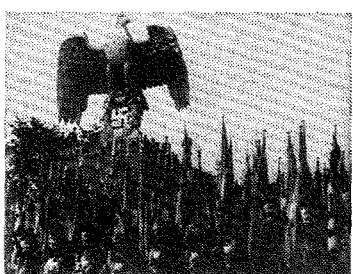
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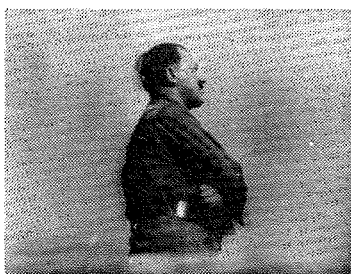
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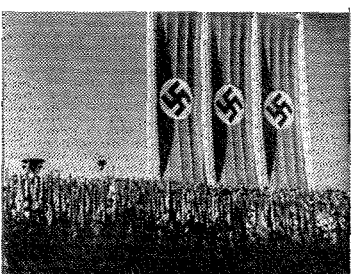
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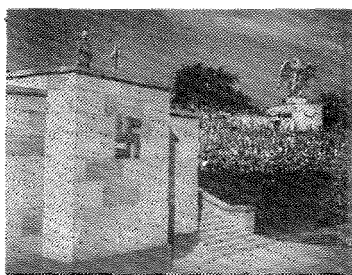
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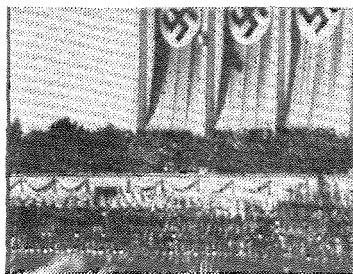
11'



12'



13'

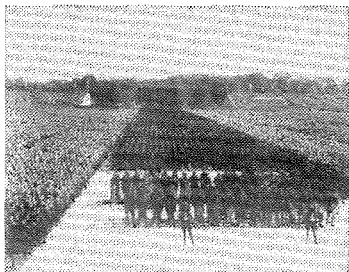


14'

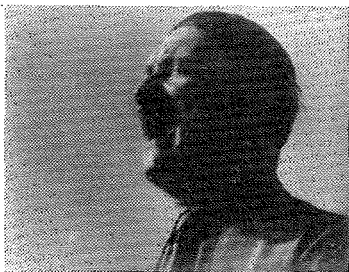
- 5' Medium close-up of Hitler at the podium, arms held together in front, and facing right.
- 6' View of the serried ranks of troops, with high ranking officers prominent in the centre and right of the frame. (figure 16).
- 7' Long shot of Hitler at the podium, angled from below. This shot is similar to shot 2', but different in that it is both more distant from the podium and, evidently, taken from the other side. The figure included in shot 2' is not visible here. The right hand side of the frame is instead dominated by a sculpture of an eagle.
- 8' High angled long shot of troops arranged in serried and regimented ranks.
- 9' Shot of Hitler at the podium. The shot is again, as in shot 7', taken from the left-hand side, but here the camera is closer. Neither the figure included in shot 2', nor the eagle in shot 7' is visible.
- 10' Troops standing with flags, the eagle dominantly present in the centre background of the frame.
- 11' Shot of Hitler that is similar in most respects to shot 5' except that the camera appears to be slightly further away.
- 12' Shot of flag-bearing troops with three huge flags displayed in the centre right background of the image.
- 13' Long shot of Hitler at the podium taken from the left-hand side again but from a noticeably less oblique angle and from a further distance than before, thus including not only the eagle, but more of the troops bearing flags assembled to the right of the frame.
- 14' Long shot similar to 12', but taken at a greater distance and including more of the troops, whose spatial disposition in the stadium is thus clearer and more intelligible.



15'



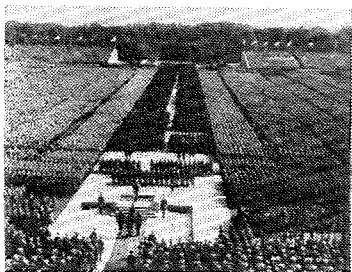
16'



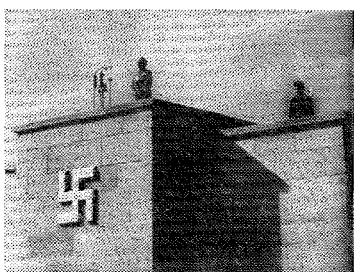
17'



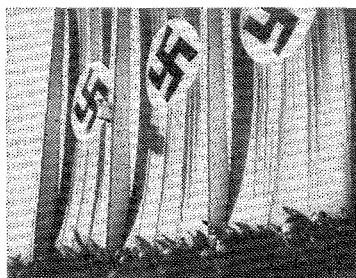
18'



19'



20'



21'

- 15' Close-up angled view of Hitler, taken from below and from the right and including his raised right hand. 81
- 16' Long shot of troops.
- 17' Close-up of Hitler, whose face is here more sideways on than in 15'. His hand is not visible.
- 18' Medium close view of an individual soldier holding a flag. Two of the large flags visible in previous shots are dominant behind him.
- 19' Very high angled long shot of podium and troops and crowds, very similar to shot 1', but taken from a slightly lower angle.
- 20' Low angled long shot view of the podium, almost identical to shot 2' but different in that the flag visible next to the figure on the right in shot 2' is here excluded from the frame.
- 21' Final shot of the three flags. Medium shot, angled from the right.

As is evident from the stills included here and from the descriptions provided above, the sequence comprises a set of minimal (but significant) differences articulated across a set of basic and insistent repetitions (the differences measured against the repetitions rather than vice-versa, as if there were a hierarchy between the two). Or rather, to be more accurate, there are two structures of repetition/difference, the one crossing the other. The first is established in the sequencing of the images as such, those including Hitler alternating with those of the scene around him, Hitler's presence alternating with his absence. Here the repetition lies in the alternating pattern itself, varied only at the point at which two shots of the scene rather than the usual one intervene between shots of Hitler (ie shots 3' and 4'). The second concerns the images themselves, the paradigm constituted by shots of Hitler on the one hand and that constituted by shots of the scene around him on the other. With the former the repetition is all the more strongly marked in that there is a specific and identifiable focus for each image – Hitler himself. Variations are established in a variety of ways – scale and distance, angle, gesture and so on, each measured against the fact of Hitler's presence. With the latter there is no such specific focus running across each of the images. In a sense, their unity is constituted precisely out of the absence of Hitler, that being their common factor. It is also, more positively as it were, provided by a repetition of those codes and effects of spectacle discussed in relation to the opening shots of the film: codes and effects of scale and composition – each shot is both breath-taking and eye-catching in a way which a number of the images of Hitler himself are not.

The economy of the structures of repetition and difference evident here deviates very little from that of the classic Hollywood

82 fiction film. In his analysis of a short segment from Hawks' *The Big Sleep*, Raymond Bellour remarks on the balance between and functioning of repetition and difference. His observations apply almost exactly to the segment from *Triumph of the Will* under discussion here:

'we note: (a) the number of shots, which is relatively high given the exigencies of the action. This allows for a discontinuity capable of ensuring a certain degree of variation of the filmic space within the given time. (b) This variation, which the narrative adopts as one of its basic options is, on the other hand, limited by a profound tendency towards repetition . . . (c) This tendency towards repetition which as we saw also expresses itself clearly through numerous relationships of partial similarity between shots (and beyond that between codes) carries with it a natural after-effect. It underscores the codic differences which give effectiveness to the basic variation constituted by the successive plurality of the shots. These differences are powerful and discrete in their distributions and transitions, having as their primary object to ensure the natural continuity of the narrative – that is to sustain its artifice, but without ever making it too obvious.' (Raymond Bellour, 'The Obvious and the Code', *Screen* v15 n4, Winter 1974/5, pp 15-16.)

A 'profound tendency towards repetition', but a tendency that is countered by 'powerful' differences – precisely that economy of process which is the mark, *par excellence*, of classical cinema, an economy whose general characteristics and significance have been described by Stephen Heath as follows:

'The coherence of any text depends on a sustained equilibrium of new informations, points of advance, and anaphoric recalls, ties that make fast, hold together. One part of the particular economy is the exploitation of narrative in film in the interests of an extreme tendency towards coalescence, a tightness of totalization; the film is gathered up in a whole series of rhymes in which elements – of both "form" and "content" – are reproduced, shifted, and turned back symmetrically, as in a mirror . . . Yet this symmetry . . . is an effect of the elaboration of the narrative which gives at the same time the necessary advance, an order. Absolutely, repetition is an absence of direction, a failure of coherence: the return to the same in order to abolish the difficult time of desire, it produces in that very moment the resurgence of inescapable difference, produces indeed the poles of "same" and "different"; its edge, its final horizon, is thus death, the ultimate collapse of same and different, pure totality of indifference. Remember how Freud can see repetition as the essence of drive and accord the death drive the fundamental place – beyond the pleasure principle – in his later accounts of psychical functioning.

The narrative join of a film recasts repetition – difference, the interminable flux of desire, the horizon of death – into the balance of a fiction (an integrity of recall and progression), thus maintains the historical function of the subject . . .’

(‘Film Performance’ in *Cine-Tracts*, n2, pp 13-14).

If this is the economy profoundly at work in the sequence, indeed in the film as a whole, it is marked by a particularity in its *emphasis* on spectacle and looking as a means, in the absence of a plot, of holding the film together, and, especially, by their functioning in relation to the figure of Hitler – the figure who literally dominates the film.

Now it is precisely at this level that the ideological operation of *Triumph of the Will* as a film is to be sought. It is only from here that the specificity of the inscription of the political ideology of Nazism can begin to be approached, since those political/ideological discourses already constituted outside the text are transformed in their very inscription, both by their figuration together and by their cinematic articulation. Moreover, of course, it is in that articulation that the effect of the text *vis-à-vis* the spectating subject can be traced. The functioning of the separation made between ideology and politics and the cinematic by those critics cited at the beginning of this article can be seen to be one which actually disavows the functioning of the film’s ‘cinematic power’, despite all the phrases about its artistry and genius.

It is at this point, finally, that I would like to return to and elaborate more fully my earlier point about the contradictions that exist within and between certain predominant conceptions of documentary, propaganda and film insofar as they centre on cinema and vision.

III

Triumph of the Will, of course, is a classic of propaganda. Propaganda is avowedly intentional. It concerns itself with the productions of *effects* (in the interests of persuasion and manipulation). Evidence of technique, form and style, evidence of a mode of semi-otic work, is both easily detectable and comfortably admissible, contained within the problematic. (Indeed, in a sense it is demanded by it. Problems only come when technique, form and style transcend the crudities of propagandistic rhetoric. Then they become art. Hence the ambivalent attitude towards Riefenstahl.)

There is a contradiction, however, between propaganda and *documentary*. Film critics constantly find themselves attempting to sever those connections between the two that propaganda films themselves persistently make. The only way they can find of doing so, usually, is to ascribe a set of cynical intentions to the films and their makers: they use the connotations of veracity that documentary overwhelmingly produces in order to give spurious sub-

84 stance to a set of dubiously biased arguments and in order to dupe their audience, thereby betraying the 'documentary ideal', which thus is restored to a place where its truth is uncontaminated.

One of the main reasons for the critics' concern, of course, is that these films demonstrate uncomfortably that documentary is a process of construction, rather than a process of reflection. (This is not, of course, to maintain that propaganda films are therefore necessarily progressive, even in this context: precisely because they trade upon, rather than challenge and open to question, the contradictions involved in documentary and its ideologies, they tend always to remain fundamentally complicit in its perpetuation.)

The role of technique, form and style can, therefore, insofar as they contribute toward the definition of propaganda, and insofar as they highlight an instance of construction within it, be seen to be odds with documentary and the liberal critics' 'documentary ideal'. As Annette Kuhn has argued, this ideal involves, as far as possible, an *effacement* of these traces of semiotic work:

'The absence of marks of meaning production in such films, their presentation of themselves as transparent, entails also an apparent lack of any language other than that of everyday speech (of natural/naturalized language). The signs of the production of meaning in fiction films [or in propaganda films] may be contained but nonetheless displayed to some extent – as "style" for instance. In the documentary, however, they are simultaneously disavowed and subject to a work of effacement: "style" is inappropriate, the image "speaks for itself".' ('The Camera I – Observations on Documentary', *Screen* v19 n2, Summer 1978, p 72.)

Now if we here take spectacle, with its marks in an evidence of visibility and looking, as one particular mode of cinematic style, as compatible with propaganda documentaries, but as incompatible with documentary itself, a curious contradiction begins to emerge. Spectacle focuses exactly those two aspects of cinema – visibility and looking – which otherwise function as the very foundation of the ideology of cinematic documentary, and which articulate in that ideology as follows:

'All forms of documentary, whether or not they also embody any direct verbal address . . . inscribe spectator positions which hinge on various articulations of the instance precisely of observation. They work in such a way by posing a variety of relationships between the eye or the look of the spectator, that of the camera, and that of the camera operator. Because in documentary film the apparently self-evident and unmediated 'truth' of the visible is fetishized, the spectator is placed in a relation hinging upon his or her command of that which is observed. The spectator becomes the observer *par excellence*.' (Ibid, p 82.)

If this is the case, why should *evidence* of the visible and of obser-

vation, the *display* of their articulation together, come into contradiction with documentary? 85

The answer lies, I think, in the fact that such evidence and such display not only highlight the instance of the construction of a position of looking and visual command, not only highlight the instance of the construction of the visible itself, but also displace knowledge, the essential ingredient in documentary, in favour of the construction of a mode of visual pleasure. Spectacle is content neither with simply rendering visible the observable nor with inscribing the spectating subject simply in position as observer. It is much more concerned with the processes of rendering visible and of looking themselves. What counts in spectacle is not the visible as guarantee of *veracity* (of truth, of reality), but rather the visible as mask, as lure. What counts is not the instance of looking as *observation*, but rather as fascinated gaze. It addresses the imbrication of looking and the visible not as the prior condition to the construction of a form of knowledge about a particular subject or issue, but rather as that which hovers constantly across the gap between the eye and the object presented to it in the process of the scopic drive. Documentary disavows the gap altogether, subordinating both instances to that set of essentially empiricist codes of exposition required to produce its knowledge effect. Spectacle, on the other hand is essentially concerned with the gap itself, the concern being not to challenge its unproblematic elision, not to construct a mode of distanciation, holding the gap as a contradiction addressed to the spectating subject, but to institute an oscillating play between vision and the visible in order to address scopic drive exclusively, to lure the gaze of the spectator and fill that gaze with plenitude of the image itself. Hence, to refer back to *Triumph of the Will*, the oscillating play with the traces of the presence of the plane in the opening shots, the play with Hitler's presence in the motorcade sequence; hence, also the heavily composed images (the sign of the plenitude itself), and to take a final example, the shot of the moving flags intercut with Hitler at the podium in the sequence from the ceremony for the war dead discussed above (shot 3'): the shot is temporally constructed so that it is initially unclear as to what is being shown; it only gradually emerges that the patterns of light and shade are in fact flags being carried by the troops. The pattern, and the uncertainty as to their identity lures the spectator's gaze, the gaze is only satisfied once it is clear that they are flags. It is relation between the two, their articulation together, that characterizes spectacle, an instance of that hovering over the gap between vision and the visible indicated above.

In the particular case of *Triumph of the Will*, the contradiction between documentary and spectacle is dealt with by recourse to notions of artistry and style. Displacing issues of truth, reality, manipulation and so on, the film emerges simply as 'cinematic

86 poetry' (Barsam, *op cit*, p 29). But this, in turn, emerges as in contradiction with the 'ideology' of the film, a contradiction which *insists* in the discourse of the critics, but which is manageable insofar as it is handled in terms of form on the one hand and content on the other. It is only when that particular division is challenged, and only when the nature of the film's 'cinematic power' is closely examined as an integral part of its ideological operation, that the contradictions begin to emerge. As they have done so, we have seen that the key term – spectacle – itself involves contradictions, ones which provide another theoretical means with which to challenge documentary and its ideology at their very basis, that is at the level of vision and the visible.

Television, News and the Social Contract

Ian Connell

The 'impartiality' of television news and current affairs is now widely considered a myth. This standard critique is usually presented in terms of 'bias' and 'distortion'. In this article I argue against the terms and implications of this position. In a wide variety of studies the pictures and definitions constructed by journalistic practices are said to provide 'biased' or 'distorted' accounts of an independent and objective reality; they are 'biased' or 'distorted' because they are informed by a body of ruling and dominant ideas, which are said to 'belong', in a simple way, to ruling political or economic groups. In short, television journalism is made to appear to be a kind of megaphone by which ruling ideas are amplified and generalised across all sectors of the social formation.

The material examined here is television's account of the Labour Government's attempts, since October 1974, to win, and maintain, the 'voluntary obedience' of trade unions to the policy of wage restraint. This account recruited and represented the different positions constructed in and through the struggles between unions, Government and the Trades Union Congress leadership. There was no attempt to mask the controversial reception of the Government's economic policy. Particularly during 'Phase Three' of this policy, much of the reporting concentrated on explicit trade union opposition. If television were 'biased', as the conspiracy theorists would have it, if it took its orders directly and unquestioningly from the ruling political-economic forces, and if, moreover, it had no material presence and effectivity of its own, there would have been little or no re-presentation of this opposition.

It could certainly be argued that while the positions of all those directly involved in the negotiations and struggles over and around the Social Contract were aired, not all of them had access to television in the same way. As this article attempts to demonstrate,

88 some of the already constructed positions on the Social Contract, particularly the position which argued for a return to free collective bargaining, were subordinated in the discourse of news and current affairs. At the same time, the Government's position was taken over and constructed as the 'basis of reality' on which serious discussion was mounted. While Labour Ministers and their supporters, including, at crucial moments, the Economic Committee of the TUC, were asked whether a 'voluntary policy' would be effective, while there was speculation whether the various limits set by the Government would hold and whether some 'statutory measures' would have to be introduced, television journalism did not question the basic premise that inflation was 'wages led': on the contrary, this premise constituted the baseline of television's accounts. This form of constructing television's account does not contravene the editorial imperative to demonstrate 'due impartiality'. According to the Annan Committee's Report, 'broadcasters must take account, not just of the whole range of views on an issue, but also of the weight of opinion which holds these views'. To put it another way, the practices of television journalism reproduce accurately the way in which 'public opinion' has already been formed in the primary domains of political and economic struggle, how it has been structured in dominance there.

Television journalism does not accomplish this work of reproduction by being 'biased', as this has been defined by the conspiracy thesis. It is not accomplished *despite* the basic editorial criteria, but rather, precisely in and through their practical implementation. It is because this policy is put into practice that a complex unity, is forged between the accounts produced by television and these primary accounts which are constituted in the social formation as the dominant, sometimes hegemonic, definitions of political-economic antagonisms. While the basic editorial criteria are, as a matter of course, scrupulously implemented, it does not follow, as many a professional broadcaster has imagined, that television journalism is ideologically inert. Television is an ideological instance precisely because of the effectivity of these editorial criteria. This can be seen, for example, in the shaping of 'topics' by the practices of television journalism. The explanations proffered by news and current affairs programmes are made to seem to be the 'best sense' of a given situation. They are, in the unfolding of television's account, categorized as 'common sense', 'moderate public opinion', 'rational understanding' or 'the consensus'. The basis of these explanations is the already constructed definitions in dominance. Television actively and independently contributes to their dominance by working them into the fabric of its explanations and by granting to them the status of what 'many' or 'most' people think.

A pre-condition of this ideological labour is the separation and fragmentation of television's coverage from the actual events

covered. Through a series of visual and verbal operations discussed 89
below, television's account is made to seem apart from, above
and beyond, the struggles over the Social Contract. It is made to
seem a 'neutral' space for the serious discussion of controversies.
Simultaneously these same operations construct an 'audience-
position' which, like the account itself, is separated out; the audi-
ence is constantly hailed as witness of, but not participant in, the
struggle and argument over issues. This is the result of the con-
struction of a televisual space in which the struggles are dramatized
through the employment of various 'actuality forms' and then
framed and focused by an authoritative, informational address that
offers its abstracted sense to the audience. It is here in particular
that it is necessary to highlight how television journalism attempts
the generalization of its explanations. So, the main proposition
which this article will elaborate is that in and through the signify-
ing practices specific to television journalism, political-economic
antagonisms are contained and their development as antagonisms
is neutralised. This is not accomplished by abandoning the basic
editorial imperatives, but on the contrary by fulfilling them.

I Appropriating primary definitions

The following sections consider the relation between television
journalism, the Government and trade unions, not by recording
and examining what broadcasters have to say about their views
of this relation, but rather by how these views are constructed and
articulated in and through the routine operations of journalistic
story-telling. We will therefore be focusing upon the perspectives,
themes and propositions which have been advanced by journalistic
accounts. This will be done by isolating and examining key elements
employed in the construction of these themes and in their organiza-
tion into apparently 'adequate' and 'coherent' explanations. These
same elements will also be examined to clarify the attempts made
to align the explanations with the 'lived experience' of audiences.

Something of this approach has been adopted by other, recent
studies of television's account of political issues, studies which have
worked with a notion that television is now the key 'agenda-setting'
device in the sphere of public opinion. It has been argued, for
instance, that beside the longstanding commitments to inform,
educate and entertain enshrined in the constitutional documents
of both television networks, television now plays the role, albeit
unwittingly, of drawing public attention to and shaping the under-
standing of the political situations it chooses to cover. The major
points of this approach can be summed up as follows. It has been
argued that broadcasters possess the power to: (1) define which
issues will enter the sphere of public awareness and discussion; (2)
define the terms in which these issues will be discussed; (3) define
who will speak on the topics that have been selected; (4) manage

90 and control the ensuing debates and discussions. At the heart of this approach to television journalism is the notion that the professional ideologies of broadcasters – that body of ‘routinized and habituated professional “know-how”’¹ – uniquely and absolutely determines all decisions concerning subject matter, speakers and treatment. This approach transfers or displaces the power to define issues from dominant political and economic forces as attributed by the ‘conspiracy’ theorists to the broadcasters.

As a consequence, programmes are not studied in order to specify what they reveal about the actual relations between broadcasting and other sectors. Television is regarded as an absolutely independent prime mover in the social formation; the main emphasis of studies which adhere to this position lies in determining how programmes set about effecting what Trevor Pateman has called a ‘relationship of complicity’ with audiences.² The central argument of Pateman’s study leads him to suggest that the phrase, ‘television coverage of an election’ is a misleading one. Television, he argues, can only be said to provide ‘coverage of’ an election, or any other political event for that matter, if it has an existence independent of it. For him, the evidence of television’s increased penetration of election campaigning suggests that such independence has withered away; ‘we do not have television coverage of an election: we have a television election’.³

From this perspective, television journalism is not seen as taking over and conferring authority on definitions of political situations that are initially formulated elsewhere. Rather, it is seen as creating these definitions itself. In Pateman’s study, as in others which hold this position, television is said, however, to mediate political events. But if we accept that television does play a mediating role, we must also accept that political events are distinct from the television events – programmes of particular kinds – which selectively represent them. The two events are certainly related: the latter consist of illustrated stories *about* the former. But they are not identical, nor can the television be said to have displaced politics – it signifies it in specific ways. The agenda of political issues, what I have called the ‘primary definitions’ at a given moment in time, is *not* constituted by broadcasters, but rather by contending political forces, and by economic forces that have pertinent effects for the conduct of the dominant, parliamentary political practices. Television journalism takes its lead from political forces, the dominant ones at any rate. The process of journalistic story-telling, which will be referred to here as a process of *informed speculation*,

1 Stuart Hall, ‘The Determinations of News Photographs’, *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* n3, 1972.

2 Trevor Pateman, *Television and the February 1974 General Election*, BFI Television Monograph n3, British Film Institute, 1974.

3 Pateman, *op cit*, p 2.

represents and then attempts to *generalise* definitions which already 91 dominate the political sphere.

Like others, Pateman's study is important in that it gives due weight to the specific, formal properties of this process, especially those by which generalisation is attempted. He draws attention, for example, to the use of 'inflexible formats and ritual repetitions', generalising definitions, and to a variety of other 'attention-holding devices'. The nature of such devices and their application stems largely from the taken-for-granted and, therefore, generally unquestioned sense of what constitutes 'good', 'telegenic' material and 'good', 'attractive' presentation – in short, from professional 'know-how'. Assessments of what makes for an attractive presentation of issues – that is, one which will win and hold the attention of an audience – are, ultimately, based upon the assumptions about audiences, their interests and attitudes, which are held by professional broadcasters. The deployment of these 'attention holding' devices has consequences for the way in which political issues and their primary definition by leading protagonists are made to appear on television. They are *trans-formed* in particular ways.

One consequence of the different ways in which particular programmes make their appeals to audiences is that not all the issues that are selected and presented by news bulletins subsequently become items in current affairs programmes. Nor do those which pass into the sphere of current affairs receive attention from each programme located there. Some issues are considered to be more appropriately handled by particular programmes than by others. Certain issues, however, are covered by the full range of news and current affairs programmes. At the moment, such issues include the contested policies of the Government to 'curb inflation' by preventing 'excessive wage settlements', encouraging 'moderation in wage negotiations' and by 'holding down' public expenditure. Issues such as this, which are classified by politicians as well as broadcasters, as ones that 'affect the nation as a whole', are more or less guaranteed access to each of the regular current affairs magazines, eg *Panorama*, *Tonight*, *Weekend World* and *Nationwide*.

There are other types of issues which are not granted this universal access. Some issues, crime for example, while receiving extensive routine surveillance in television news bulletins, rarely set in motion the full current affairs apparatus. They will typically be handled by investigative documentary reports and by some of the magazine programmes, such as *Tonight*, which, over a period of time, have come to include higher proportions of 'social problem' issues. For a 'crime issue' to receive the more intensely speculative forms of coverage which, over a period of several years have come to be regarded as the province of *Panorama*, it would have to have passed through certain additional thresholds of definition by accredited witnesses in the primary domains of the political and

92 the economic. An example could be a run of particularly violent crimes, which were said to represent a whole social pattern of events, or something which was seen to be a more general crisis in the legal apparatus as such. We cannot speak of a universal journalistic mode of appropriation and transformation of these primary definitions. The same content, already formed in the primary domains will be transformed in different ways depending upon the televisual 'slot' to which they are directed.

This can be briefly illustrated by reference to the peculiarities of *Nationwide*. Political issues of the type regularly featured by *Panorama* occupy an exceptional and subordinate position in *Nationwide*'s repertoire of topics. When such 'heavy' political items do appear there, they are typically marked out by some variation on the basic phrase – 'and now we turn to more serious matters'. The following statement from the programme indicates more clearly the basis upon which selections and placings are made: 'Whenever we can on *Nationwide*, we try to bring you the brighter side of life, to counter all the gloom and despondency around us. And tonight we have a success story . . .'. Similar statements about the programme itself pepper its presenters' narratives; they fulfil a meta-discursive function, reminding audiences of the status of the programme's transformations and, simultaneously, marking their difference from the others paradigmatically possible within the field of television journalism.

This cast to the programme's transformations is carried through to the handling of issues demarcated as 'heavy'. In general terms it leads to a quest for the 'ray of hope' or the 'good news' amidst the 'bad'. So prevalent is this orientation that the mere presence of contradictory forces within the events covered by programme can be elevated as a 'sign of hope'. Thus, for example, having failed to produce any measure of conciliation in the course of interviewing representatives of the 'men' and 'bosses' at Chrysler's Coventry plant at a time when the company was seeking Government assistance to continue operating in this country, Michael Barratt wound up the interview thus: 'Well, at least you're sitting together here on a very cold night tonight, and let's hope that kind of spirit moves on' (*Nationwide*, 19 February, 1976). In short, the mere presence of the 'representatives' in the discourse is mobilized to suggest that conciliation which was manifestly absent from the interview's account.

These kinds of transformations have mainly to do with generalising, though they unquestionably structure the forms of appearance of issues. They are, however, *secondary* aspects of journalistic story-telling in the sense that they can only be engaged on condition that 'the real' has already been constructed. The *fundamental* aspects of the process of informed speculation are those which articulate 'the real'; the processes and means by which primary definitions in the political and economic spheres are recruited to

and incorporated within the overall fabric of television journalism's accounts. Television journalism does *not* initiate definitions of political and economic issues. These definitions originate in the struggles between contending political and economic forces. Television does not take on board each and every definition in exactly the same way. I want now to examine this differentiating process of appropriation in some detail.

I have referred to the process of journalistic story-telling as one of informed speculation. This is a process common to all the slots in the news and current affairs sector, though the precise form of its accomplishment will vary according to the particular slot. It is comprised of two relatively distinct stages. During the first, the main concern is to *establish* the topic and its 'basis of reality'. Between the first and second there is a transitional stage during which questions or points of interest are formulated. It is these which organize the second speculative moment in the process. Broadly speaking, it is possible to identify a repertoire of elementary television forms which are mobilized in the work of informed speculation. Together they constitute the formal paradigm of this sector of broadcasting – a basic set of formal possibilities from which selections are made and combined together in particular ways. This repertoire of possible forms has been developed and modified over time, but since the mid-1950s to the present it has remained essentially stable.⁴ It contains the following elements:

- A live studio 'piece to camera'
- B „ „ report
- C „ „ interview
- D „ „ debate
- E actuality film sequence
- F „ „ „ with commentary over
- G „ „ „ with captions superimposed
- H „ extract
- I „ 'piece to camera'
- J „ report
- K „ interview
- L graphics with commentary over
- M stills with voice/captions over
- N credits/titles with music over

The repertoire of communicative roles in journalistic television includes: (1) presenter; (2) commentator; (3) reporter; (4) chair-person; (5) interviewer; (6) interviewee; (7) expert; (8) protagonist in debate; (9) man/woman-in-street (ordinary person). These roles are not abstract essences; they exist and are differentiated only in and through discursive practice. The elementary forms can, of

⁴ It is not possible here to detail the establishment of this paradigm, but the 1960s represent a moment of consolidation and crystallisation in this field of broadcasting.

94 course, be broken down into smaller units. A – The live studio debate, for example, a form used throughout the field but only within the speculative stages, can be broken down into lower units of ‘transaction’, ‘exchange’, ‘move’ and ‘act’. However, it can be regarded as elementary in the sense that each mobilization of this form contains certain necessarily fixed syntagms at each level of organization.

Not all the forms and roles I have mentioned are mobilized in the ‘informational’ stage of journalistic story-telling. News bulletins do not, for example, employ ‘live studio debate’. Though the selections and combinations vary with the nature of the primary definitions, any item in a news bulletin would include, at the very least, A and B (live studio report). A not infrequent combination is:

A – B – E – F – K – A. This combination gives to the work of appropriation its manifest informational cast. There is a dialectical relation between the elements A, B (live studio ‘piece to camera’, live studio report) and E, F, K (live studio report, interview, debate) in which the latter appear to ground, licence and authenticate the former. Conversely, the statements made in A and B function as metalanguage; they appear to highlight, to set in place for the audience, the ‘truth’ of statements made in K especially. Although manifestly informational, the work of establishing topics is not ideologically inert. The heavy reliance on ‘actuality’ forms, particularly when pre-definitions of an issue have already constituted it as having ‘grave-consequences-for-the-nation-as-a-whole’, masks the extent to which the issue is framed and focused by the broadcasters themselves. The work of framing and focusing accomplished by the discourse of A, B and the commentary over in F establishes, for the audience, a certain orientation or ‘point of view’. But, this is grounded in the events and statements depicted in the actuality forms – ‘the real events, out there’. The use of the actuality forms sustains a ‘transparency-to-reality’ effect which makes the constructed orientation appear ‘natural’ – the only one possible.

II

To begin to demonstrate how this part of the process works and the nature of the orientations constructed, here are two examples from television news coverage of certain key moments in the proceedings of TUC conferences. The first example is taken from the coverage of the TUC conference in September 1974 at which the Labour Government’s Social Contract was ‘officially’ endorsed; the second, from the TUC conference in September 1977 which rejected a further year of pay restraint, but agreed to hold to the Government’s twelve month rule. Each employs *H* (actuality extracts) extensively to recruit the government’s definitions to television’s account.

L

Actuality scenes of delegates applauding, Voice over:

'The Prime Minister gets a standing ovation from the TUC at Brighton after a speech that is seen as reinforcing the prospects of in October election.'

'n studio, newsreader talking direct to camera:

Mr Wilson in a forty-five minute address outlined the achievements of the Labour Government, attacked Conservative policies and praised the Social Contract on which, he said, Labour's policies and hopes for a better future depended. Mr Wilson also attacked those whom he said had already been fighting the next election campaign for several months.'

Wilson seen addressing delegates:

Britain's ability to fight inflation and our trade gap have been inhibited by the fact that from the moment a minority government was formed there were those in the political world, and in the press, in finance and in some of those well-heeled activities on the fringe of productive industry who have been more concerned with fighting the next general election. All right, they'll have their chance. We must be prepared though for an all-out effort on their part for, say, a few more weeks' (laughter and applause).

;

Actuality scenes of delegates applauding, Voice over:

A standing ovation for the Prime Minister from the TUC after telling them some hard facts about the economy.'

'n studio, newsreader talking direct to camera:

'Good evening. The Prime Minister today delivered to the trade unions his plea for moderate pay deals and for maintaining twelve-month intervals between pay rises. He said he believed the moderate increases and reduced taxation were the best way forward. He refused to go back on what he called the absurd inflation of 1974/1975. Instead he hoped to see inflation below 10 per cent. Mr Callaghan believed this was possible with moderation and the government could respond by stimulating the economy. He hinted at a mini-Budget later this year saying 'I certainly do not rule out measures during the autumn'. For half an hour Mr Callaghan spoke forcefully to TUC delegates in Blackpool who tomorrow will vote on the twelve month rule. He argued that there were dangers in pay flexibility and free collective bargaining and he regretted that third year of pay code was not possible'.

Callaghan seen addressing delegates:

As I say I would have liked eh a third year, but ehm all right I'm old its not on. Well, other things won't be on either. And this is, think, the situation that the movement as a whole as got to discuss. We believed, I still believe, that all the difficulties that a

96 combination of moderate earnings increases and reduced taxation is the best way to safeguard the interests of your members. I dare say some of your members don't believe it. Well that's a situation we all have to face because this is a democracy. I understand. I would agree that there is a case, a very important case for flexibility. It's the argument, if you like, against a statutory wage policy which I am not in favour of. But flexibility implies that differentials will be allowed to grow. You can't have an inflexible flexibility. And if we get into the situation in which as a result of one excessive claim and settlement, others use that to make a back and leap frog over it, Madam chairman, there's nothing the Government can do then to stop you all being back in the situation you were glad to escape from in '74, '75 when wage claims made at twelve-month intervals eventually became wage claims made at nine-month intervals, and if it had gone on, some of them were being made at six-month intervals, and if you had continued, it would have been at six-week intervals and three-week intervals and you would have been in hyper-inflation (shouting up, but remains at the level of general background noise). Well, I don't believe, indeed, I would say with certainty, that the majority of your members and their wives do not want a return to that situation' (BBC *News*, 6 September, 1977).

The extracts presented here from these early evening television news bulletins do not exhaust the accounts. In both cases the accounts, after the actuality quotes, are passed over to the Industrial Correspondent who begins to fill in more details of the speeches and the response to them. His comments will be considered in a moment. In both cases the establishment of the topic relies heavily on the use of actuality forms of television journalism: direct verbal, and verbal-visual quotes. Thus, the accounts have the appearance of simple reports which do little more than give the main points of the Prime Minister's speeches. The use of these actuality forms is the practical mode of demonstrating the objectivity of television journalism. They are ritualized means of affirming that what has been selected from the available pool of definitions has not been invented by the broadcasters. They are, then, the key means by which the transparency effect of television is realized, an effect which denies the productivity of television's specific practices. Undoubtedly the broadcasters are appropriating a topic which has already, in some measure, been pre-structured, articulated in the political discourses. The often extensive use of actuality forms masks the specific structuring accomplished by the broadcasters. They are not simply engaged in re-stating what has already been said; their appropriation of the topic represents it as a televisual event.

What is particularly interesting here is that the process of authentication relies upon – and constantly re-affirms – the veracity

of journalistic discourse as such. The process requires both modes of television: direct, live recording/transmission from the studio (marked principally by direct address to camera), and the transmission of recordings of events that have already happened (marked principally by the *lack* of direct address). Each requires the other; together they function to validate one another's order of truth and to pose the former as the authoritative and predominant mode. The temporal register, marked by the system of address to camera, not only locates the studio-based discourse in the here-and-now, but simultaneously reduces the actuality discourse to its content. The 'elsewhere' of activity and participation is, in and through the juxtapositioning, made to appear as the simple substance of the 'here-and-now' of witnessing.

The moment of appropriation is one in which television can be said to be dominant over politics, but without obliterating the latter. The articulations produced in the political discourses continue to exercise determinations on television's mode of appropriation. Between the Prime Ministerial speeches and what the journalists have to say about them, there is a *reciprocity of perspectives*. To put it another way, the journalists' accounts not only provide details of the speeches, they are also positioned within the terms of reference of the speeches. The propositions and interpretations contained in the speeches are reproduced by the journalists' accounts and, because these assume the form of straight reports, are made to appear as 'facts'.

The clue to this lies in the opening remarks of the accounts. In both examples, these remarks function as headlines, that is, they announce, in summary form, a focus or an orientation to what follows in the main body of the account. The orientation provided by the headline in each example is contained in the statement that each speech received a 'standing ovation from the TUC'. This observation is taken to convey that what the Prime Minister had to say was 'well received'. In the case of example 2 this point was underscored by the current affairs coverage of the speech later in the day. Opening an interview with Ken Gill, General Secretary of TASS (Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers) and Allen Fisher, General Secretary of NUPE (National Union of Public Employees) Robin Day said:

'First of all gentlemen, your verdict generally on the Prime Minister's speech today, which was received quite warmly and, indeed, with standing applause at the end. Mr Fisher?'

Alan Fisher: 'Well, I wouldn't have put it warmly. I would have thought it was respectfully by the Congress, and I think that's usual with the TUC and the Labour Prime Minister. I wouldn't think it was warmth' (*Tonight*, 6 September, 1977).

What Allen Fisher's re-definition of the standing ovation indicates

98 is that the journalists had given not just *an* interpretation of the reception, but one which was favourable to the Prime Minister's position. That this account was positioned within the Prime Minister's terms of reference was also indicated by its calling the Prime Minister's interpretation of the causes of and remedies for inflation 'hard facts about the economy'. There is little questioning in this example of the Government's proposition that excessive claims and settlements over wages brought about inflation and that 'the best way forward', therefore, lay in 'moderate increases and reduced taxation'. What there was concerned how effective the Prime Minister's presentation of his case would be 'at shop floor level in the months ahead'.

This direction was developed in the 'news analysis' section of the account which followed the run down of the Prime Minister's speech and the details of its immediate reception. News analysis, typically provided by the specialist correspondents, represents a kind of half-way house between 'straight reporting', the informational stage of informed speculation, and 'comment and analysis' contained in the second speculative stage of the process. The object of news analysis is to provide a preliminary contextualization of the themes contained in the report section of the account. As in this example, this typically means providing an assessment of the responses made by important people involved in the situation. On this occasion the BBC's Industrial Correspondent began by noting that 'there was nothing new in what the Prime Minister had said . . . though the style of delivery of the economic analysis seemed rather more determined . . . and he told delegates squarely that so-called free collective bargaining had not produced social justice'. From here he moved to the main concern of this part of the account, 'union leaders' reactions', which were said to vary 'according to the stance taken on the twelve month rule and on moderation in pay settlements'. (Notice here that the yardstick by which union leaders are positioned is provided by the Government's case and not their own.) This was presented by means of extracts from video-recorded interviews with two union leaders, Clive Jenkins, who was presented as 'a militant exponent of free collective bargaining', and Tom Jackson, who was presented, in an unqualified way, as 'a supporter of incomes policy'. The questions asked of them set up a situation in which their replies were confined to an assessment of the effectivity of the speech and, also prevented any detailing of the alternative case.

The labels applied by the Industrial Correspondent to the alternative economic strategy that had been adopted by the TUC on the previous day in the form of 'an orderly return to free collective bargaining', and to its proponents further reproduced a sense of the Government's case as 'hard fact'. Although an alternative case is announced, it does not form the basis of the journalists' account, nor is its logic developed. Indeed in being marked out as the

exclusive property of 'militants' it is made to appear as though it had no logic. The overall effect of this disposition of the available cases is to render the Government's strategy – adherence to the twelve month rule, moderation in wage bargaining and possible cuts in taxation – the only plausible one. 99

This presentation of the Government's strategy, the pursuit of a third round of 'pay restraint', in the informational stages of journalistic story-telling was by no means novel nor exclusive to this particular bulletin. By the time of this particular broadcast it had become a familiar and recurrent theme in the news. It began to emerge in the accounts provided of Denis Healey's Budget of 29 March, 1977 which, among other things, had made promises about cuts in taxation if another round of restraint could be agreed with the unions. It also was one of the fundamental, organizing themes of the news coverage of the various trade union conferences between April and July. Throughout this coverage the case on which the Government's strategy was based, namely that 'excessive' wage settlements were the cause of inflation, was as such only infrequently dealt with.

The 'transparency-to-reality' effect is, then, not simply accomplished in and through the juxtapositioning of the formal modes of television journalism to which attention has been drawn. It also requires an ideological alignment between the definitions constituted in the journalistic accounts and those already constituted as dominant in the discourse of the political-economic sphere. The 'reality' of television journalism is not immediately identical with the 'reality' of the political-economic discourse; nor does the former in some simple way reflect the latter. Rather, the reality of television journalism must be formed in such a way that it *corresponds* to the reality that has been formed by the political-economic discourse.

III

I want now to examine, in more detail, the specific journalistic practices by which this correspondence is attained, and to do so with reference to the television coverage of the trade union conferences held in the months before the TUC conference of September 1977. In so doing, I hope to make it clear that between this coverage and the Government's account there was not only a shared ideological problematic, but also that the signifying practices of television journalism actively constituted the dominant definitions as normal and self-evident. From earlier sociological studies of television journalism we know that it is centrally concerned with those actions which have been pre-signified as 'unexpected', that is, with actions which break from the meaningful and consonant⁵,

5 J Galtung and M H Ruge, 'The Structure of Foreign News', in J Tunstall (ed), *Media Sociology*, London, 1970.

100 to use Galtung and Ruge's terms. It is the latter, the meaningful and consonant, the expected, which operates as a yardstick for determining the 'unexpected'. The expected, if it is manifested in the utterances of television journalism at all, does so as 'what everyone knows' and therefore, does not need to be spelt out. During the period we are concerned with here, the Government's proposition that inflation was wages-led was only rarely mentioned, let alone explicitly articulated. At an earlier moment, during the first months of 1975 after Healey had announced that 'it is far better that more people should be in work even if that means accepting lower wages on average . . . that is what the Social Contract is all about', the proposition was explicitly articulated and speculated on. It is not possible here to go into details of the form that the articulation assumed in television news. It can only be pointed out that it was prompted by a reversal in the position adopted by the Labour Party during the latter part of 1974 when the whole question of wages was subordinated for the purposes of gaining the assent of the TUC and winning the October 1974 General Election.

By 1977 the proposition that inflation was wages-led had become a taken for granted in television news – an apparent 'fact-of life' – and the form of the coverage actively reproduced it as such. Though rarely mentioned in the course of television's monitoring of the trade union conferences held between April and September 1977, it nevertheless functioned as a premise, as the 'always-already-there' of the explicit articulations concerning the conferences. The substance of many television news items in this period was conference debates about wages. Only rarely were other debates on other topics featured. The following is a typical example, of how the wages debates conducted by the 'minor' unions were represented:

Newsreader talking direct to camera:

'The National and Local Government Officers' Association voted decisively for another phase of pay restraint today. The resolution before them was against restraint but they threw that out by 448,000 to 139,000. So that means that the fourth largest union in the country with 700,000 members, and the largest of the white collar unions is behind the Government' (*Independent Television News*, 15 June, 1975).

The account does not simply provide information about the vote; it gives the vote a particular significance. The narrator transforms this, and indeed other votes in other unions, into evidence of support for the Government. It is made to be of interest only in terms of the relation to 'another' phase of pay restraint.

Throughout this period then, the facticity of wage restraint was constantly reproduced. What television news constructed as the 'unexpected', what bulletins articulated was whether the unions were going to deliver. Certain conferences were expected not to

deliver, for example the Scottish TUC's conference in April 1977. 101 Both the BBC's and the ITN's coverage elected to feature prominently the Scottish Secretary's (Bruce Millan) speech to that conference. The BBC's 'news analysis' of the speech can as follows:

Industrial Correspondent, in-studio, direct to camera:

'Mr Millan came to Rothesay to try to impress upon this pretty left-wing gathering the advantages of continuing pay restraint after July and of preserving the Social Contract between Government and Trade Unions, no less than the Prime Minister will be doing much the same thing at the Welsh TUC later this week – but again for the benefit of a much wider audience.

Mr Millan's message was that the next phase of the pay policy would not be an easy one to work out. How far and how quickly it was possible to return to normal collective bargaining without throwing away the benefits from the last two years in a general free for all. A wages explosion, he predicted, would push prices and unemployment even higher still, and could bring down the Government.'

At this point there was a direct, actuality extract depicting Millan setting out what he thought the consequences of a Conservative government for Scotland would be.

In this section of the transcript we not only see some of the key devices employed for handling the expected opposition of the Scottish TUC, but also for the handling of other unions already known to be likely to oppose the Government's policy. The narration, following the lead set by Millan and other Government Ministers, forms this likely opposition into a call for a wages explosion. In this case, the advocates of opposition are presented as a 'pretty left-wing gathering' which in the register of television news talk has the effect of marking them off from 'the moderates', that 'much wider audience' spoken of in the narrative which might just be seduced by decisions taken at this conference.

Following the actuality quote, the Industrial Correspondent set about contextualizing the decision that the Scottish TUC might take on the issue of pay restraint. To convey the significance of the decision he said:

'Tomorrow the Scottish miners will lead the opposition to interference of any kind in free collective bargaining. If this move gains majority support, as it might, although there is some doubt tonight, it will really be the Scottish TUC doing its usual militant thing; opposing incomes restraint. And the foreign exchange markets were well-advised to ignore this. A couple of union leaders up here from London pointed out to me that issues like the Social Contract and pay policy are subject to discussion between the Government and TUC – the British TUC, not the Scottish TUC.' (BBC News, 19 April, 1977).

102 The perspective on the Scottish TUC is, from the evidence of the final remarks again licensed. It is not wholly the invention of the Industrial Correspondent since he reproduces the statements of 'a couple of union leaders up here from London'. Nevertheless, the perspective is supplemented with the reference to the possible majority support for free collective bargaining as the Scottish TUC 'doing its usual militant thing', and by opening this part of the account with a reference to the 'Scottish miners'. It is a massively re-assuring perspective; it is tantamount to saying that the opposition is mere ritual and, moreover, will have little impact on the eventual outcome of 'national' negotiations.

When, on the following day, the move to oppose any form of wage restraint was 'narrowly defeated', the Industrial Correspondent back-peddled somewhat on his previous estimation of the significance of the decision. He said:

'This is not a conference of any real significance in the decision-making process. But at this stage in the attempt to work out a phase three of pay restraint, the Government might be quite relieved that even the unions up here haven't voted for a free-for-all' (*BBC News*, 20 April, 1977).

In the course of advocating 'terminating the Social Contract' at the Scottish TUC, Mick McGahey had argued that the main reason for doing so was that 'the Government had not fulfilled its pledges within that Contract'. An earlier item, in the same bulletin in which this was quoted, could have been seen to have provided some evidence to support McGahey's case. The opening item of the bulletin, read out in the studio direct to camera, announced:

'As the debate on pay policy continues figures out today show that the rate of increase in earnings continues to fall. It's now well below the current rate of price inflation. Average earnings in February were 11½ per cent higher than at the same time last year. The increase in prices over the same period was just over 16 per cent.'

Although the item on the Scottish TUC followed on immediately, no explicit connections were made, for to have done so would have run contrary to the plot structure of television's accounts.

The proceedings of the Scottish TUC, as represented by television, are only of interest because of the potential threat they posed to the Government's strategy. The predominant feature of the plot adopted is to determine 'how well' the Government was doing, a feature which was retained throughout the following months. In May, the information that 'the rate of inflation was back where it was nearly a year ago. It's now 17.5 per cent' (*BBC News*, 22 May 1977) did not lead to any fundamental revision of the plot. Rather, it was transformed into a misfortune, a test of the Government's

fitness. The account noted that 'at a time when the Government is trying to win a third year of pay restraint, the relationship between pay and prices is not helping'. But later, the Government is redeemed. The narrator (BBC Industrial Correspondent) pointed out that 'the Government sticks by its forecast of inflation falling to 13 per cent by the end of the year' and that 'the best that can be said about the figures is that they were expected by the Government who made it clear before to-day that inflation won't start coming down until the second half of the year'. That the figures were expected, known about, implies that the Government also knew how to deal with them. 103

Later in the year, as the major unions, particularly the National Union of Miners and the Transport and General Workers' Union rejected the Government's economic strategy, the plot was modified, but again not fundamentally revised. The Government was still allocated the part of hero and the unions the part of villain. There was however, a marked shift from a heroic to a tragic orientation.

In the coverage of the Transport and General Workers' Union conference the centrepiece was again made to be the consequences of their discussions on pay for the Government's economic strategy. The *BBC News* bulletin of 5 July, 1977 represented that union's leadership's attempts 'to keep Britain's largest union firmly in line with TUC objectives' and in so doing emphasized that the leadership believed 'that if there were a wages-free-for-all, it could damage the long-term prospects for the British economy'.

While this part of the account employed actuality forms to ground the narration, these were not employed in representing the 'considerable ground swell of opposition to these policies'. This opposition was formed up entirely by means of the newsreader's direct address to camera:

'And as Mr Jones and his executive left the conference hall tonight they took with them copies of a motion that will also be put to the delegates tomorrow which calls for an immediate return to unfettered collective bargaining and the total ending of phase two on 1 August of this year – a call which, if it is heeded would finally shatter what remains of the Social Contract.'

The articulation of the 'considerable groundswell of opposition' in this union considerably raises the stakes. The narration transforms that opposition into an act of destruction which threatened not only the remains of the Social Contract, but also the long-term prospects of the British economy. This signification of this union's actions was massively re-enacted on the following day after its vote 'against an orderly return to free collective bargaining'. We have then, the lowering of wages represented as 'orderly' – a term bringing into play such semantic equivalents as 'obedient', 'not unruly', 'well-behaved'. The representation of the union's vote against this opened with the statement that delegates had 'de-

104 feated the moderate motion against the advice of their General Secretary, Jack Jones', thus associating wages restraint with moderation. There then followed an actuality extract from a speech against 'the moderate line':

'Brothers and sisters we've been conned (cheers). The pensioners and lower paid workers are worse off. The social services have been cut to ribbons, and we're in the grip of the talons of the international money-lenders. Of course we do not want a Tory government. But if this government does not reverse these disastrous policies and introduce the measures advocated by the Labour Party Conferences, that is a socialist alternative, we'll get Margaret Thatcher at the helm as sure as little apples. Recent election results have shown this. Wages a major cause of inflation? They never have been. The last two years have proved than. Another period of marking time? We've had enough. Mr Healey you're not on.' (*BBC News*, 6 July, 1977).

It would have been possible, as on other occasions, when actuality quotes had been included from the speeches of Cabinet Ministers, to provide background information on the speech. But this did not happen. Instead, the journalists opted to emphasize that the 'militants . . . dominated the whole debate' and that the debate had been 'noisy, emotional'. From here on, the account concentrated on the defeated executive's line and then included an interview with Jack Jones, 'the architect of the Social Contract' – a constructive image which contrasts sharply with the destructive images constructed for the opponents.

The interview once again returns to constituting the destructive effects of the motion that had been carried. Jack Jones was asked, first of all, 'whether the threat of a wages explosion now threatened the Labour Party's own ability to govern' and then, following an affirmative reply, 'I think that is a danger . . .', he was asked:

'whether you think now, after this decision this afternoon, the political stability of the country is not threatened as a result of what has happened, that the government may indeed not be in a position to govern any longer'

which again received an affirmative response when Jack Jones said: 'Well, the political stability could be threatened if the Liberals decided to withdraw support . . .'. The transformation of the act of opposition into an act of destruction is consummated by the interview; it is not only authenticated, it is also rendered authoritative by the affirmations of the architect of the Social Contract.

IV

The television news bulletins which we have been examining here

are not the 'windows-on-to-reality' that they are made to seem by professional ideologies of broadcasting and by the extensive use of actuality forms, of which more shall be said in a moment. The point to be stressed is that we do not see 'through' the bulletins to an objective and independent 'reality' beyond. We see only that reality which has been jointly produced by the journalistic practices of signification and by the other practices of signification employed by journalism's accredited witnesses in the political-economic sphere. In this respect, the simple 'bias' thesis is inadequate, based as it is on an untenable assumption of a separation between images and ideas on the one hand, and objective, material reality on the other. Within the terms of the 'bias' thesis we have no option but to regard television journalism as a mere and inadequate reflection of material reality rather than an active material process itself intimately bound up in the construction and articulation of reality. This thesis takes at face value the journalistic practices of signification. The construction and articulation of 'reality' as seemingly independent, as natural, is inscribed in the most basic practices of television journalism. The organisation of the visual discourse, for instance, which shows little variation between networks or across the period from 1974 to the present, is such that it produces this effect. Newsreaders and correspondents are, always, to be seen talking direct to camera (seemingly 'to us'), while those placed in the drama of news as protagonists are always to be seen talking at an angle to the line of vision of the camera (seemingly 'to others'). The depiction of protagonists in this manner constructs a potential sense of distance between them and viewers. This is a *sense of witnessing*, that is, of being present at, but not directly involved in, a 'reality' which is, in and through this visual mode, made to seem 'out there', separate from and independent of those positioned as witnesses. The relation in which the 'audience' is cast by this visual mode is that of *on-looker*: the proceedings of protagonists are 'looked in on'. Whether the social beings who watch television news programmes, who are themselves sites of intersection of a multiplicity of discursive practices, actually assume this position is, of course, another matter. The point to be stressed here, however, is that the mode of vision currently in dominance presents the relation in this form, that is, as a relation between the 'involved' and the 'uninvolved'.

The exposition and interpretation of the actions of those cast as the 'involved' falls to the narrators, newsreaders or specialist correspondents. Their direct address is a posture which re-creates certain of the conditions of interpersonal communication. Often, following their initial exposition of the pro-televisual action of the involved, newsreaders will turn from the camera to look at the monitor in the studio, signifying that they, like the viewer, are similarly detached, uninvolved on-lookers. The direct address has then the potential effect of including the viewer in the process of

106 communication. The viewer is positioned as a partner in the exchange: the direct look of the newsreader/reporter/specialist correspondent implicates the audience. So while the audience is set apart from the protagonists it is lined up with the media personnel, in the studio.

These forms of vision of television news bulletins are based on, and contribute to the reproduction of, an already given political ideology. The visual disposition of the role of audience as on-lookers in relation to what is shown of protagonists by actuality sequences and as partners to the exchanges initiated by media personnel reproduces the notion that the 'nation-as-a-whole', is divisible into 'activists' and the 'rest' who are involved in problematic situations only in as much as they are affected by them. Within this *lived* view of the polity, with its assumption of a fundamental division between those 'who do' and those 'who are done by', the studio appears as the vantage point of the latter. It seems the site upon which those who are done by – 'the public', 'the majority', 'most people', 'consumers', 'taxpayers' and so on – gain an insight into the actions of doers – 'the unions', 'politicians', 'militants'.

This apparently fundamental division is further refined in what is said of the issues and activists featured. It is clear from the extracts above that not all those signified by television as 'activists' are spoken of in the same way. Some are verbally defined as 'representative individuals', they are not only named, but have their authority to speak, their 'representative' credentials presented: 'The Prime Minister, Mr Callaghan . . .'; 'the union's General Secretary, Mr Jones . . .'. Others are referred to only as a collective – 'the militants' motion . . .'. Not only are they presented without credentials, their representativeness is either heavily qualified or denied. Those opposing the policy of wage restraint within the Parliamentary Labour Party were presented as a localized grouping, as 'the left wing of the Labour Party'. In the coverage of the Scottish TUC Conference, the Scottish TUC was not only localized but also presented as having 'real significance in the decision-making process'.

It is principally the verbal discourse which accomplishes the classification of activists, a classification which separates out the legitimate and acceptable activists from the illegitimate and unacceptable. As we have already suggested, these classifications are the effects of the adoption of a certain political perspective, that is, a certain way of understanding already given political positions. Any classification of positions is possible only on the condition that a system of classification already exists. The system of classification by which television news identified and placed the forces involved in the economic struggles of the last few years did not spring uniquely from the broadcasters' professional 'know-how'. Nor did it emerge 'from the outside', a wholly independent per-

spective. It is, rather, the reproduction of a system of classification already ingrained in the institutional procedures for the management of the clash of opposing activists. 107

The perspective adopted by the news bulletins was, as we have said, that of the Government and the TUC in as much as they were its principal advocates. The adoption, and reproduction, of this perspective did not result, however, from a conspiracy between broadcasting, the state and the hegemonic organs of civil society such as the TUC. Television journalists do not have to be explicitly instructed, as a rule, in how to appropriately classify the protagonists of a given situation and the positions they advance. As we have seen, the Government's interpretation of the causes of inflation was accepted without question. It was a premise of the coverage, and the proposed solution, wage restraint or the lowering of 'real' wages, was thus made to appear as a 'natural' consequence. Only the opposed interpretations were questioned and made to appear 'unreasonable', the product of 'militant' self-interestedness. In part, the unqualified acceptance of the Government's logic proceeded from its status as the 'elected representatives of the people'. But this is not a sufficient condition; the Government's handling of inflation was questioned and probed, especially in the current affairs programmes, though not in a fundamental way. Its position was accepted, principally, because the broadcasters *shared* its logic. For both broadcasters and for the Government it seemed 'obvious' that the prices of commodities are determined or regulated by wages. It was the acceptance of this 'antiquated fallacy' which placed the broadcasters, Government and the TUC on the same side.



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Video: Technology and Practice

Stuart Marshall

In 1965 the Sony Corporation released the portapak – a portable camera/recorder unit – into the consumer market. The Korean artist Nam Jun Paik purchased the first machine available in New York. This date has come to figure strongly in any history of the artist's use of video and the reasons for its celebration are fairly obvious. Suddenly, after many years of development within the broadcast industry, the technology of television production became available to non-broadcast users – the means of televisual production could finally be appropriated. Throughout the 1960s excessive claims were made by all kinds of video users and fashionable 'media theorists' about the necessary and beneficial effects of the new technological developments. It was during this period that catch-phrases such as 'guerrilla television' and 'alternative television' seemed to hold so much promise. Yet with hindsight it is evident now that a critically alternative televisual practice was by no means an inevitable result of the new technology – that in fact these notions amounted to little more than another form of the technological determinism which has characterized both theoretical and popular views of the role of television. The taking up of this determinist view of the effects of video is not surprising when one recognizes that much radical thought about the media in the 1960s centred upon the impenetrable broadcast television institution and its monopoly of the means of production and communication. While the underground press and pirate radio stations in Britain flourished, the broadcast television industry suffered no commercial competition from either radical or alternative productions.

This situation inflected radical critical discourse which represented television as the 'cause' of certain identifiable social 'effects', such as social apathy, in much the same way as did traditional sociology. Such a view tends to ignore the fact that the broadcast institution is only one of the many ideological institutions which

- 110 work for the coherence of the social formation and as such is just as open to internal and external contradictions and conflicts as any other. To see television as a 'cause' is inevitably to deny a more subtle and useful analysis of television as the site of production of representations – as both an industry and a signifying practice.

Video Technology and the Broadcast Institution

Nevertheless the development of non-broadcast technology has most certainly had its effects – many unintended – in its articulation with other pressures upon the broadcast industry. Television technology was developed in the service of the broadcast form and the history of television production techniques demonstrates the struggle with technology and its moulding to conform with particular technical standards. Many other possible applications of the technology were rejected or simply not considered because they could play no part in the forms and requirements of broadcast television. The development of technology which explores the possibility of non-broadcast forms will therefore inevitably disturb the broadcast institutions which will shift and change in response to new demands created by developments not initiated by them. The threat is both complex and specific and it is necessary to examine it carefully in order firstly to situate the part played by the new technology without falling into a determinist argument and secondly to assess the possibility of an alternative practice which can exploit the contradictions opened up by the threat.

It is significant that in the late 1920s, when Baird was unsure that his team's research would be taken up by the BBC as a broadcast service modelled on radio, he was also developing the technology with a view to non-broadcast use, no doubt carefully considering the commercial future of his products. Chief among these was a projection system for mass viewing which was demonstrated at the Coliseum Theatre in London in 1930 in conjunction with a stage show and at the Metropole Cinema, Victoria in 1932 when an outside broadcast of the Derby was shown. The 1932 transmission was also relayed through the BBC transmitter and after this significant broadcast the television projection system, apart from very specialized use, was not to reappear as a developed technology until the video projectors of the 1970s. The broadcast industry needed videotape technology in order to dispense with the need to work to schedules determined by transmission programming, to enable studio originated productions to be repeated without being recreated, to cut the costs and delays involved in the use of film and to build up an international market in studio productions. The drive behind the research was therefore towards both increased efficiency in production and resources and the creation of more marketable products.

The specialized electronics industry began to develop semi-professional tape machines when it was recognized that they had a potential market as a managerial aid and for product promotion. Other markets and applications such as the very profitable new field of educational audio-visual aids and of surveillance technology opened up. The major problem for the electronics industry was to produce equipment which would sell at a fraction of the price of professional machines – the first portapak cost one-twentieth of the price of the comparable broadcast unit – and yet maintain the high standard of reproduction quality and stability which would be demanded by viewers of television. As manufacturers rushed to release products into the market, recording standards and gauges proliferated, the upshot being total incompatibility between different manufacturers and rapid discontinuation of unsatisfactory or superseded models. Eventually a relatively small number of coding standards were consolidated using $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$ and 1 inch recording tape. Video tape recording for television is made on 2 inch tape using a 'quad' scanning system which exhibits high stability and reproduction quality. The $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$ and 1 inch technologies use a helical scanning system which exhibits sufficient stability to ensure accurate reproduction on video monitors but must be recoded and resynchronized to be broadcast with adequate reception on the domestic television receiver.¹ It is this difference in recording standards which has in the past constituted the major distinction between broadcast and non-broadcast video technology, but which is now beginning to blur.

There is a union ban on the broadcasting of helical scan material in Britain, although BBC's *Open Door* has in fact transmitted $\frac{1}{2}$ inch material. The ban firstly reflects a concern over the technical quality of reproduction which is understandably used as a standard of excellence by technicians in an industry which maintains a sharp division of labour between them and 'creative' staff. Secondly there is an obvious union concern with the possibility of $\frac{1}{2}$ inch independent productions finding their way into broadcast programming. This ban on helical scan material partly explains the problems that have arisen over the use of Electronic News Gathering (ENG) units which are currently the subject of negotiation between the BBC and the ABS (Association of Broadcasting Staff). The ENG portable units, which are intended to replace the use of location film equipment for news reportage, use a helical scanning system which demonstrates how closely the broadcast and non-broadcast technologies are now related. The helical scan machines used in ENG are lightweight back-packs which require minimal signal reprocessing to be brought up to broadcast standard.

1 The 'helical' system uses two recording heads which place a signal on the tape diagonal to its path. The 'quad' system uses four heads which place the signal at right angles to the tape's path.

112 Other problems over the use of ENG equipment also apply to most new technology that the industry is attempting to introduce. At a time when the independent television companies are making enormous profits and government pay restraint is in force the new technology has become a convenient focus for wage bargaining. The introduction of portable video units and sophisticated editing machines is seen, particularly by the ACTT (Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians) to involve a threat to jobs. Lightweight ENG machines developed outside the broadcast industry for minimal crewing are used by a crew of two in the USA and Thames Television is at present negotiating for an ENG crew of five. The ACTT, which has as many members in the film and film-processing industries as it has in television, views the introduction of new technology with great suspicion when the television companies themselves admit that its introduction will lead to redundancies. The ACTT is itself experiencing internal conflicts between its film and electronic technician members. In 1977 London Weekend Television initiated discussions with video engineers, vision mixers and film editors about the retraining of film editors made redundant by the increased use of video tape. The discussions were finally abandoned because of the recalcitrant attitude of the engineers. The upshot of this conflict over the introduction of new technology is that British television companies are lagging behind American companies in the use of sophisticated editing and portable equipment, with the possible consequence of a growth in American documentary production.

The new technology which has found its way into the industry has changed production techniques and in many cases the forms of televisual text. As far as studio drama production is concerned, the possibilities of flexible editing have allowed for a more discontinuous shooting style and an approximation of filmic constructions, eg Lindsay Anderson's recent production of Alan Bennett's play, *The Old Crowd*, for ITV. The use of lighting can therefore become more precise as use can be made of individually lit shots rather than an acceptable compromise lighting for a sequence of shots. The use of chroma-key devices, which allow for the electronic insertion of scenes within scenes, has been extended from its first use in news programmes to a number of 'experimental' productions in a fantasy genre eg BBC's *The Snow Queen*. In this case its most common use is the keying of actors into a drawn cartoon-like set.

'Radio must be transformed from a distribution into a communication system, and could be the most formidable public communication apparatus, a fantastic channel-system, if it could be used not only to broadcast but also to receive – that is, to have the listener speak as well as listen, not to isolate him but to put him

in contact with others. Radio's present distribution function should be abandoned – it should be organised by the listeners themselves.' (Bertolt Brecht)²

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Although video technology has had many unintended effects upon the broadcast industry the problems already outlined have remained as internal conflicts. While the audience and customers for broadcast television and video remain separate, external conflicts do not arise. It is at the point where the video electronics industry intervenes in broadcast television's exclusive control over the means of communication that severe conflicts arise in a competition for the audience. Competition for audiences has of course constituted a conflict between the broadcast institutions since the breaking of the BBC's monopoly by the founding of commercial television. This conflict has always been problematic and has frequently lead to a contradiction between the notion of public service and a drive to achieve ratings. The recent pointing of the video industry towards the creation of a domestic consumer market probably constitutes its greatest threat to the broadcast institution so far. The conflict becomes localized precisely at the point of reception – at the domestic television receiver. These new domestic machines are by no means equatable with amateur film equipment designed for domestic production. The cassette recorder has been specifically developed to intervene in the ratings battle. The new possibility of viewing two programmes broadcast simultaneously by recording one for later viewing, immediately upsets the finely balanced structure of antagonism between the BBC and ITV – a structure which has its effects at every level of the broadcast industry from production decisions to programme schedules.

Fragmentation of the television audience has already begun to take place with the development of separate individual rather than family viewing habits. In the USA the second television receiver is becoming increasingly popular. The extensive sales of video games which plug into the domestic receiver bear witness to the real possibility of its extensive non-broadcast use. Barry Cox of London Weekend Television voiced fears about such competition recently. 'At the moment we have the advertising monopoly of the TV set. But as soon as we lose that monopoly, as soon as we have real competition for the use of the set, then we are screwed.'³ It is evident from the growing number of publishers entering the independent video cassette production market that such fears are well founded. Cassette programmes, if they incorporated advertising, could be sold or hired at minimal cost. Broadcast television with

2 Bertolt Brecht, 'Théorie de la radio' in *Ecrits sur la Littérature et l'art* 1, *Sur le Cinéma*, Paris 1970.

3 Quoted in J Bugler, 'Labour relations: Has television contracted the Fleet Street disease?', in *Edinburgh International Television Festival* 1978, Official Programme.

114 its implicit structure of centralised transmission and domestic consumption is shifting to encompass such developments, driven forward in competition with industries and institutions unconstrained by the demands of public accountability. The access programme such as *Open Door* and London Weekend's *Look Here* represent such moves within programming and the structures of broadcast technology itself are being redeployed in the first steps towards a reactive technology. Ceefax and Oracle are teletext information services developed by the BBC and ITV respectively which are coded into the signal spaces of normal broadcasts.

Video by Artists

It is against such considerations that one must place a history of alternative video practice. Such work includes a wide range of activities and applications from community agit-prop work through the use of video in 'alternative' psychotherapy to video by artists. I will only give a brief account of the developments that have taken place in artists' video firstly for reasons of space and secondly because it is only within this area that attention has been paid to problems of representation. There are clear differences between the USA and Europe both in the work that has been produced and the funding opportunities available. In some instances there is a direct relationship between the levels of funding and technological investment and the types of work produced.

In the USA one can identify two broad categories of work, the first being 'synaesthetic abstraction' and the second being a personal, diaristic documentary approach frequently veering towards the 'psycho-drama'. The term 'synaesthetic abstraction' is used to refer to the electronic generation of abstract imagery using video synthesizers and image colourizers. These possibilities of image production are specific to the video process and make use of the modulation and resynchronization of the electronic wave forms used in coding and decoding a video image. Such productions are necessarily dependent upon the availability of specialist hardware which is usually to be found in university art and music departments which specialize in such 'electronic painting'. The video synthesizer industry is developing as rapidly as that of the audio synthesizer in the early seventies, its major customers being such institutions and the rock music promotion industry. For the most part 'synaesthetic abstraction' tends to avoid issues of representation and promotes the mystification of the means of image production.

Within the category of the personal documentary there is a strong sub-category of work which can best be described as narcissistic video. Curiously much of this work is based upon a strongly modernist aesthetic which seeks to elaborate the 'inherent properties' of the medium itself. Specific to video is the possibility

of the immediate viewing of a recording and the live monitoring of the recording by the subject being recorded – he or she places him or herself in front of the camera and sees him or herself on the monitor. Such a configuration can lead to a vicious encapsulation of image feedback readily describable in the terms of an Imaginary captation.⁴ Certain artists have pushed such involuted structures of looking to their logical limits by constructing video environments – installations – in which the live image of the spectator appears and disappears throughout the space in the strangely non-reversing video mirror. Vito Acconci is probably best known for tape works in this idiom. In an installation version of a tape *Command Performance*, shown at 112 Greene Street, New York, in January 1974, Acconci positioned a video monitor showing a prerecorded tape on the floor in front of a spotlight stool. The seated spectator's image was transferred live by means of a camera to a monitor behind him or her, in front of which a seating rug provided a viewing position for other spectators. In this configuration the single spectator watching the tape is placed in a position similar to Acconci's when the prerecorded tape was made, he or she literally being 'in the spotlight'. The viewing situation consequently draws the spectator into the work, in that he or she becomes an object of voyeurism for other spectators in the same way that Acconci is an object of voyeurism for him or her. It is only within the women's movement that such work gathers a political insistence. Works by Lynda Benglys, Joan Jonas and Hermine Freed all employ such devices, drawing the viewer into a bracketed structure of viewing which then collapses problematically with the introduction of facts of sexual difference.

In Europe the majority of work produced is strongly inflected by a modernist aesthetic. There is a constant attention to the possibilities of the technology and its means of image production. In some sense one can compare such work to modernist work in film in that there is a focus upon the processes of image production. Yet there is a significant difference between the media which concerns the method of image registration. In video the image only appears at the moment of 'projection'. Videotape does not offer itself as a material surface to be worked upon. Hence the modernist attitude is towards systems and signifying procedures. Separate units of image production – camera, recorder, mixer, monitor – can be brought into differing and complex relations but the producer is always kept at a distance from the actual electronic process of image coding and registration. Many works have focused attention upon the video monitor object either by retaping images from monitors in order to emphasize edge and frame or by perceptual

4 See also: Stuart Marshall; 'Video Art, the Imaginary and the *Parole-Vide*' in *New Artists Video*, Gregory Battcock (ed), Dutton, New York, 1978.

116 plays between the screen as an image surface and as the transparent front of a box. In David Hall's *This is a Video Monitor*:

'an initial take of a woman describing the paradox of the real and imagined functions of the monitor on which her image appears is regenerated optically off a monitor screen, a third off that and so on. Vision and sound progressively change, at each stage distorting the expected characteristics, displacing the imagined for the real – configurations of variable light intensity at the surface of the screen, each time identifying and re-identifying the implications of her recurring statement.'⁵

A second category of European work – which in the case of *This is a Video Monitor* 1974 and many other works frequently overlays the first – is concerned with conventions of televisual representation. Here there is a frequent use of broadcast imagery which is reprocessed, re-edited – seen differently. Reference is often made to the iconography of newscasting and the chat show or panel discussion in an attempt to charge the endemic images of television. In *Vanitas* 1977 by Tamara Krikorian two discourses of representation are articulated through their common subject matter of portraiture. The first is that of the seventeenth century *vanitas* genre of painting where a self-portrait of the artist is combined with highly conventionalized symbols of vanity and transience. The second is that of televisual newscasting where the familiar image of the newsreader is electronically coupled with newsworthy images of the world. A voice-over draws out the connections between the two discourses identifying their conventions of representation and their ideological effects. In *La Belle et la Bête* 1977 by Marceline Mori the images of broadcast television are placed within the space of their consumption – the sitting room, site of domestic electronic entertainment. In the first sequence the image of a woman moving in front of a window is seen reflected in the screen of a television receiver. In the second sequence the untuned receiver is switched on, so introducing a field of electronic noise into the reflected image. In the third section the reflected image is combined with the off-air image of a comedian telling a joke. A slow mix takes place between the off-air sound and the sound of a record player in the same space playing David Bowie's song *The Beauty and the Beast*. A new coupling of sound and image takes place as the unheard comedian grimaces to the accompaniment of the record. No longer motivated by speech his facial expressions take on new meanings in relation to the subject matter of the song. 'There is a specific interplay here between sounds which endorses this combination of video and off-air recording, yet pro-

⁵ Statement by the artist from the London Video Arts 1978 Catalogue. This and all following works are available from London Video Arts, 12/13 Little Newport St, London WC2.

vokes a complex of questions about artist's and broadcasters' attitudes towards the medium.⁶ It is this category of work which explicitly takes up a critical position in relation to dominant televisual practice and seems to offer the greatest potential as a critical avant-garde.

Many of the first artists in the USA to use video were contracted to major galleries. In order to market their tapes several of these galleries published video catalogues making tapes available for both sale and hire after the fashion of multiples or prints. The predicted customers were presumably collectors of avant-garde art and no doubt the development of the domestic cassette recorder was seen as increasing the potential market. The major customers turned out to be educational institutions and museums with a reputation as collectors of avant-garde art. None of these galleries were able to cover their costs and those which still deal with videotapes subsidize distribution with profits from the sale of painting and sculpture, or receive grant aid. As the possibility of wide-scale gallery subsidy for production faded, the funding role of the National Endowment for the Arts, The New York State Arts Council's Creative Artists Public Service Programme (CAPS), The Guggenheim Foundation and the individual State Arts Councils became essential. In Britain no major gallery has had a commercial interest in the showing or distribution of video. The major sources of production funding have been the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Regional Arts Associations. Very little video production has been funded by the BFI Production Board. The exhibition of independent work has taken the form of gallery shows organized by independent producers usually with the financial aid of the ACGB.⁷

Although in Europe and the USA there have been many broadcasts of artist's productions, in Britain there have only been the two instances of Peter Donebaur's commissioned abstract tape for BBC's *Second House* and a single BBC *Arena Art and Design* programme which chopped works into a magazine format. An experimental television workshop was suggested to the BBC in 1970 but it was argued that 'experimentation' could only be conducted within the confines of established programming and production – a near impossibility while television studios are held in the stranglehold of production routines. Ironically the setting up of experimental television workshops in the USA such as WGBH Boston, WNET New York and KQED San Francisco – which later became the

6 Statement by the artist from the London Video Arts 1978 Catalogue.

7 Recent shows which these producers have either organized or co-organized were: *The Video Show* at the Serpentine Gallery London in May 1975; *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* at the Third Eye Centre, Glasgow in March 1976; *The Video Show* at the Tate Gallery in May 1976; *Video Art '78* at the Herbert Art Gallery, Coventry in May 1978 and the three shows *Artists Video* at the Biddick Farm Arts Centre, Co Durham in 1976, 1977 and 1978.

118 National Center for Experiments in Television – was encouraged by Public Television which was itself established as an attempt to break the monopoly of the commercial networks. It was precisely the capitalist excesses of the networks which led to the provision of a minority and in some sense alternative broadcast services. Both WNET and WGBH have been substantially funded by the Rockefeller Foundation who along with large corporations such as Xerox, IBM, Mobil, and Exxon are contributors to PBS finances. There are signs that Rockefeller finances for WNET and WGBH will shortly be withdrawn. The NYSCA and the NEA which both support the TV lab at WNET are putting pressure on WNET and WGBH to orientate their activities more towards the production of programming as it appears that most of the grant aid has been used in 'experimentation' rarely leading to broadcastable products with a definable social function. The contradiction between the 'limited appeal' of productions by artists and the social possibilities of the broadcasting of independent productions has evidently been identified. Unfortunately there is good reason to believe that such financial pressure may lead to a backlash against any radical television practice. The withdrawal of Rockefeller support will leave WGBH with a \$250,000 funding deficit. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the primary funder of Public Television, will not fund programming for a very limited audience and broadcasts of artists' productions have only reached an audience of less than one per cent. Independent production has therefore found itself at the centre of the contradiction between notions of public service and the demands of the ratings which has dogged the broadcast institutions for years. The high costs of capital investment in video technology have always constituted a major problem in assessing a progressive and coherent policy for the future of independent video funding. While the funding of individual producers through bursaries and specific project grants is obviously essential to the development of any kind of lively independent video culture, such a policy tends to constrain production at a technologically primitive level. Costs of equipment hire are maintained at an artificially high level because the major hire customers are the managerial services and product promotion industries. Although it is necessary to recognize the occasional radical and challenging productions that are made within the broadcast industry it is important that a strong argument be made in Britain for the setting up of a television workshop in which the very specific pressures and constraints of studio production routines would be expected to be challenged. Much could be learnt from the mistakes made in the USA in assessing the function of the workshop and the most appropriate forms of intervention.

In 1976 a number of British independent video producers came together to form London Video Arts which is committed to the production and promotion of independent video work in Britain.

With the financial aid of the Artists' Film and Video Panel of the ACGB it has compiled an international library of videotapes by some eighty independent producers, has published a hire catalogue and has initiated regular showings in London. LVA hopes to make independent productions more accessible and to stimulate and focus a debate about their future. It is expected that the distribution/hire service will be used mainly by educational institutions but LVA hopes to act as an independent publisher if a market is created by the widespread use of the domestic cassette recorder. In this case, as in the case of the video disc, distribution is largely dependent upon the development of the consumer durable electronics industry. The release of the video disc player – which promises to be much cheaper than the videocassette machine – is being delayed until the companies developing it have recovered the research and production costs of the cassette system. At such a time LVA could take up the role of the independent record producer.

Problems concerning the availability of the means of production and the viability of alternative means of communication form the inescapable context of artist's independent video production. Inevitably, therefore, many artists are becoming more concerned with such issues and with the necessity of establishing their practice as one of intervention. The fact that such an intervention can at present only take the form of an appropriation of broadcast imagery in a textual analysis of televisual forms is an indication of the power of the dominant practice and the difficulties of intervention at other levels. This is not to deny the progress that has been made in establishing alternative usages for the technology and other viewing contexts for productions but rather to make an argument for a more coherent policy for the future of video both as a technology and as a practice. Responsibility for the funding of video has, in the main, been placed for convenience with the film panels of the various funding bodies. Such panels have an obvious interest in promoting the community agit-prop uses of video in that this is the least expensive and shortest lived area of video production and consequently offers little financial threat to independent film-making at a time of decreasing budgets. Funding bodies consider video to be unpardonably recent – it lacks a legitimizing history. This reveals the same reactionary attitude which has made the establishment of television study courses so difficult and necessitated the constant reiteration of an argument for the aesthetic worth of televisual practice. A group such as LVA offers a necessary base for struggle against such vested interests. So far demands from LVA for an intelligent and responsible attitude towards the future of video funding have been avoided or dismissed. Hopefully if sufficient pressure is brought to bear on such bodies they will begin to consider the potential of video practice at this crucial moment in the history of television itself.

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Subjectivity, Ideology, Class and Historical Materialism

Nicholas Garnham

Paul Willemen's 'Notes on Subjectivity' (*Screen* v19 n1, Spring 1978) is both an encouragingly clear exposition of the *Screen* definition of ideology and of the position of the question of the subject within that problematic and also represents a distinct addition to what I regard as the essentially idealist formulations that have dominated *Screen*'s recent trajectory.

Obviously there are differences within the *Screen* board concerning the issues raised by Willemen's article, differences in part signalled by Brewster and Cowie's dissenting note to Willemen's article (p 61); since the recent exchange between Coward and Hall et al¹ raises the same issues and since Willemen's exposition, in my view, clarifies certain problems with the position he espouses, I would like to take this opportunity to try to clarify my own sense of the relationship between *Screen*'s project and historical materialism.

My criticism of the *Screen* trajectory in general would be for its stress upon a narrow area of the problem of the theory and practice of ideology which, while I would not argue with Willemen's general statement about the whole structure of relations in this field, leads in effect to the privileging of the ideological instance *vis-à-vis* the economic and to nothing but rhetorical gestures towards the concrete analysis of 'institutions' in their historically concrete whole. This tendency to stress the ideological is further reinforced by the obsession not just with psychoanalysis and the subject from a psychoanalytical perspective, but with a particularly

1 Rosalind Coward, 'Class, "Culture", and the Social Formation', *Screen* v18 n1, Spring 1977; Ian Chambers, John Clarke, Ian Connell, Lidia Curti, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson, 'Marxism and Culture', followed by Response by Rosalind Coward, *Screen* v18 n4, Winter 1977/78.

122 narrow and, in my view, irredeemably idealist variant, namely Lacan. It is, I think, significant that Brewster and Cowie, when taking issue with Willemen's use of the distinction 'real' and 'reality' in his correct attempt to raise more fully and clearly than has yet been done in *Screen*, the crucial question of the articulation between the economic and the ideological, reduce the question to that of 'the reconciliation of two discourses: that of psycho-analysis and that of historical materialism.

Now Willemen in his presentation, even though he utilizes a broadly Lacanian problematic, quite specifically limits the pertinence of psychoanalysis and at least implicitly seems to give the object of its analysis a subordinate position within a wider analysis of modes of social determination.

'The "concrete experience" of the individual, determined by his or her place in the relation of production, his or her place in the real, will determine in its turn to a large extent which institutions, which discursive regimes, etc, he or she will encounter and in what order. Obviously such a mode of determination is not fool-proof. A given subject can thus be produced within eg the family in such a way that it will engage with other sets of discourses in apparently unpredictable ways. It is precisely such instances of subject-production to which psycho-analytic practice addresses itself' (p 67).

Here Willemen seems to be saying that in general a subject will be positioned in ideology by his or her place in the relations of production but that since there will be a plurality of positioning discourses with which he or she will come into contact, there are sites of possible contradiction producing random, non-determined subject positions and that it is the job of psycho-analytic practice to analyze the conditions of production of these contradictory subject positions. But such an insight is not specific to psycho-analysis. It is indeed part of the concept of character within the much-maligned 'realist' 19th century novel, where it is presented as social or psychological conflict and certainly Sartre has more to offer marxists here than Lacan. Moreover the very contradictoriness of such positions can only be so defined with reference to the determining pressures or norms of the relations of production.

The real problem is not the existence of such contradictory subject positions and whether psychoanalysis offers a privileged source of understanding the conditions of production of such positions, but the relationship between such conditions and real, material action, ie how widespread are these contradictory subject positions and do they have progressive potential? Psycho-analysis tells us nothing of the former and little of the latter. But what Willemen's more limited view of the pertinence of psycho-analysis does, in my view rightly, is shift the focus of debate on to the

relationship within historical materialism of the mode of production of material life with ideology, with psycho-analytic theory as a subsidiary moment within that broader and more central analysis, rather than arguing about the relationship of psycho-analysis to historical materialism. 123

In order briefly to substantiate my argument and to clarify my reasons for distancing myself from the *Screen* position, let me start by considering the problem of the subject. Willemen concedes, apparently, a point that I and others have been making for some time in critiques of *Screen*'s and related positions, namely that some notion of coherent individual subjectivity is required if any notion of purposive action upon and in the real world is to be sustained.

'As texts are imbrications of discourses, they must necessarily produce series of subject positions. But these subjects can be (and are) mapped on to each other, pulled into place 1. by a unifying identificatory projection: the production of an ego-ideal, the text allowing – and to some extent being designed for – the production of a subject image; and 2. by the unifying work of ideologies which fix images and places of viewing in sociality, grounding subjects in imaginary unities from which purposeful and directed action becomes possible' (p 59).

This admission is crucial if the ideological analysis conducted by *Screen* is to be brought into any relationship with a politics, let alone a 'marxist' or 'progressive' politics. I will leave aside for the moment the use of the Lacanian terminology of the 'imaginary' and the questions this raises concerning the relationship of these unities to the real. What I would want to stress is that such unities must be characterized by a certain historically determinate and determined consistency, the consistency upon which notions of individuality and 'character' in fiction are based. It does not deny the often contradictory nature of these unities or their limited fluidity and susceptibility to change under the pressure of external determinants (ideologies and so on). All that needs to be conceded is a relative coherence and a relative stability. Not to concede such a coherence leads, in my view, either to that ancient mystical appeal to an ineffable, inchoate creative force which, however disguised in the new clothes of psycho-analytic terminology (or jargon), characterizes the *Tel Quel* and related positions and explains their easy slide into the explicit anti-marxism of the *Nouveau Philosophie* or, on the other hand, to what I would see as the functionalist Stalinism of Althusser.²

Now from a social perspective this notion of the individual, of

2 For a further development of this critique of Althusserianism see E P Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory*, London 1978; H Lefebvre *L'Ideologie Structuraliste*, Paris 1971; J Ranciere, 'On the Theory of Ideology (the Politics of Althusser)', *Radical Philosophy* n7, Spring 1974.

124 character, of, if you like, an old-fashioned 'humanist' pre-Lacanian view of the subject, is in its turn based, not upon an *a priori* universalist assumption about essential man, but, like Eco's notion of the relationship between author and reader via the text, upon a gamble or, in other words, upon a judgement of probabilities, within which the concept is operative so long as these imaginary unities, which we have become accustomed to calling human subjects, can continue to operate successfully in and on the real on the basis of such an assessment of probability. Thus the unity of the imaginary unity is both historical and material. Of course such a position, abstracted from the concrete tests of history, can be accused of circularity, namely that the observed and experienced subject coherence, upon which the ideology of the human subject is probabilistically based, is itself seen as the product of that very ideology. Of course that is in part true, the unity of these imaginary unities has undoubtedly been over-stressed. But there is a greater and opposite danger from within the post-Lacanian problematic of over-stressing disunity with real politically damaging consequences to which Willemsen rightly points when he writes:

'It sometimes becomes all too tempting to adopt, as an essentialist dogma, a strategy of attack against all forms of 'imaginary unity', thus condemning oneself to romantic-anarchist project of eternal and universal subversion/transgression' (p 68).

It is in order to avoid this trap that one needs to introduce some hierarchical notion of determination in order to decide: (a) what 'imaginary' unities, both individual and corporate, are worth defending and which should be attacked. That is to say we need a historically determinate value base from which to avoid mere relativity; (b) what are the varying real effectivities of the historically determinant determination holding these unities together, both in order to undermine unities to which we are opposed and to construct unities which we support. It is in an attempt to construct such hierarchies of pertinence that historical materialism introduces the so-called economic level, as determinant in the last instance, and the concept of 'class' as the central mediator between the real and 'reality'.

Marxist theories of economic determinacy are both ontological and historical. That is to say that, while accepting that man does not live by bread alone, historical materialism asserts that bread is both primary and necessary. Thus man requires sustained material exchange with nature through labour for species maintenance and this remains true at all historical periods even though the social nature of the relationships through which this exchange takes place and by which any material surplus is distributed changes in specific ways. But historical materialism also asserts an epistemological materialism, namely that the mode of analysis shifts in order to be adequate, as a mode of understanding to shifts

in the structure of the real. That is to say within historical materialism the meaning of analytical concepts, the pertinence of various analytical approaches, the hierarchies of intellectual importance and relevance and the necessary abstractness or concreteness of the analyses are in a constant state of flux as the object of analysis itself, the real, develops historically. This is especially true of the economic which becomes a central analytical category specifically for the analysis of capitalism, because capitalism is precisely a system of generalized commodity circulation within which the economic is determinant in certain historically specific ways, ie each one of us would literally starve to death unless we entered into this structure of economic relationships. The same cannot be said of many so-called superstructural activities which are in this sense, relatively autonomous, relatively matters of free choice. It is, of course, hard for intellectuals to recognize this, hence their especial susceptibility to ideology.³

Ideology too is an historically and materially specific and shifting category. Willemsen writes that 'ideologies do not require particular classes (however defined) as their expressive subjects'. Of course this is true, but it misses the point that the very notion of ideology and of the ideological struggle related to it, derives from a notion of class and of the economic and not vice-versa. Certainly Marx's own writing and most properly marxist theories of ideology start not with the problem of ideology but with the mechanism by which social formations in general and capitalist social formations in particular, maintain their unequal distribution of the material surplus and through that maintain unequal distributions of power. That is to say the concept of ideology was developed for specific purposes, namely to explain how a specific structure of material imbalance reproduces itself. The theory of ideology is thus the product of a theory of social formations which are ultimately determined at the economic level, and is quite simply inoperative

3 'The intellectualist fallacy is identified as an occupational ideology which, like all ideologies, derives such unity as it has from a disposition grounded on a social position (more precisely, in a trajectory). It presents a mis-recognizable image of the intellectual's own situation (simultaneously justifying and masking his or her own privileged relation to practical demands and to other social groups or other societies) and, in practical terms, dispenses him or her from the tedium of empirical enquiry. The inclination to valorise the clinical, 'pure' activity of 'theoretical labour' and to denigrate the subaltern task of constructing and organising mere facts ultimately refers back to the division of mental and manual labour. It is no accident, Bourdieu argues, that the materialism which points too directly to historical and even biological determinations, short-circuiting the problematics of ideology and consciousness, is designated as 'vulgar'. This is the ironic resurgence of an aristocratic ideology of 'distinction', testifying both to the autonomy and to the dependence of the intellectual field on the field of class relations.' Richard Nice, 'Bourdieu: A "Vulgar Materialist" in the Sociology of Culture', *Screen Education*, n28, Autumn 1978, p 27.

126 in any marxist sense without that prior determinant. Without such a grounding the theory of ideology falls back into a traditional idealist history of ideas, a *Geisteswissenschaft*, a direction in which Coward, following Hindess and Hirst's notion of 'no necessary correspondence', between the levels in the social formation, is lead.

Now there are clearly coherent bodies of thought (or what Willemen and *Screen* would call 'discursive formations') that exist in such a mediated relationship to economic determinants that, *for the purpose of analysis*, their class determinants can be ignored. This does not, however, 'deny the central pertinence of certain ideologies as the expression of, or rather as the support and legitimization of, classes and class positions. Indeed Willemen himself describes very well what I would regard as a classic and central marxist formulation of the relationship between class and ideology.

'Individuals do have different relations to sets of discourses in that their position in the social formation, their positioning in the real, will determine which sets of discourses a given subject is likely to encounter and in which ways it will do so. In other words this position will determine which discursive formations are likely to combine and produce given individuals as subjects in ideology' (pp 66-67).

All that historical materialism posits is that economic class positions produce one set of positions as an average or probabilistically, rather than another. It then sometimes goes on to argue that the gap precisely between the real and 'reality' or between economic relations and phenomenological forms makes possible a disjunction between the real interests and a false consciousness of those interests. It does not necessarily, as Brewster and Cowie claim in their dissenting note, then make ideology merely 'the misleading phenomenal form of the real movement'. It claims that, because there is mediation (or relative autonomy or disjuncture or indeed whatever word or theoretical construct one uses to describe the manifestly obvious and anciently attested fact that there is a difference between the real and its representation) there is a possibility of misunderstanding. But it does depend, and here we come to a central problem with the attempted conjunction of historical materialism and psycho-analysis, at least in the Lacanian variant, upon an assumption of the primacy and determinacy of the real and upon the possibility of making reasonably accurate representations of that real.

Willemen then specifies what he calls 'specific class ideology':

'In order for there to be a specific class ideology, this must be produced for/in a class struggle by an institution defining itself as a class (or as a party/institution acting in the name and with the support of a large group of people sharing certain positions in the relations of production) against specific institutions (other

Here Willemen appears to be making the classic distinction between potential and actual class-consciousness and between a class-in-itself and a class-for-itself. But I would wish to argue that underlying specific class ideologies there are more general class ideologies, less articulate and self-conscious than specific class ideologies, often couched in universalist terms such as 'the rights of man', but probably, for all that, acting historically as important an articulation of class struggle as the more specific class ideologies. And indeed it has been a weakness of vanguard tendencies to over-value the latter at the expense of the former.

Willemen goes on to write 'having recognized the determining power of the real' without in fact offering any analysis of this determining power and indeed claiming that 'it is always and only grasped in reality, that is to say, through discourse'. Up to a point of course this is true in that individual subjects, and thus through them classes, since classes are groupings or aggregates of individuals, understand the world through mental processes which are representations of the real and thus by definition, within Willemen's problematic, discourses. But such a view places these discourses in no hierarchy of determination and it is precisely this hierarchy which is material, which is the determining power of the real. That is to say the discourses of hunger, warmth and biological reproduction are materially primary to those of philosophy or film theory and it is through the creation of wage-labour that capitalism exerts its primary power at the economic level over individual subjects by controlling in a historically determinate form their individual and class access to the means of physical sustenance. This access is articulated into two moments, the exchange of labour power for wages at the point of production and the exchange of wages for consumption goods in the sphere of circulation. This primary articulation already posits a disunity at the heart of the subject, a disunity that Marx saw as the core of alienation or at least as the core of the historically specific form of alienation that was and are capitalist relations of production. Within the centrally determining economic structure, reality is constructed by individuals not only through inter-subjectivity, that is to say in discourse, but also in direct experiential confrontation with the real. Such a construction uses available discourses, yes, but the dialectic is between the real and the discourses, a dialectic that produces the temporary synthesis Willemen calls 'reality'. Willemen accepts that and indeed I would not argue with his formulation of the relation except to say that Marx certainly, and I believe, marxism, rests upon the ultimate primacy of the real. To recognize this primacy, to recognize the historically and materially specific determining power of the real and the historically specific primacy of the economic as the determining mediating

128 form of the real under capitalism cannot be dismissed as either reductionism or economism. Such a position does not claim that ideology is the same as the economic, that it corresponds in that simple sense, but that within historical materialism the role of superstructural activity is to maintain or challenge the dominant economic order and not vice-versa; that the function, therefore, of any theory of ideology must be to explain this role. Those who, after close textual analysis of Marx, dismiss theories that see ideologies as expressions of determinate economic relations or as 'the phenomenal forms of real relation', both fail to recognize in their pursuit of 'science' the use of metaphor, thus interpreting Marx's words too literally, while at the same time failing to recognize that while we can all agree that representations are relatively autonomous, they are nonetheless, except to those inhabiting a self-reflexive idealist world of discourse, representations of something and so 'express' what they represent. What is represented is epistemologically, ontologically and historically primary to its representation which is thus determined by it.

As I have been concerned to stress, however, the exact nature of the relationship is historically specific, so that our understanding of the real passes through a whole series of historically determinate ideological detours. But these detours are themselves materially, and under capitalism, then economically, determined. A historically determinate feature of capitalist development has been the ever-increasing social division of labour with the result that our confrontation with the real becomes less direct. Nonetheless our 'reality' remains fundamentally determined by a struggle over the nature of labour, that is to say the specific forms of our physical and mental interaction with nature, and over the distribution of the products of that labour, which include ideas in their determinate material forms. But it is important in this argument not to equate the material level with the economic which is already a form of discourse, a specific historical form or succession of forms within which production and distribution is organized, that is: subsistence, primitive commodity production, mercantile capitalism, the wage-form, generalized commodity exchange, the social division of labour and so on. Moreover it is the historically specific developments of these economic forms which produces the historically determinate and specific categories or levels of the superstructure. Thus the state as a marxist concept develops out of the Hegelian distinction between the state and civil society rethought in relation to the actual concrete development of capitalism, the ideological becomes a crucial category for analysis not within thought, but because of the developing forms of the division of labour, particularly the split between mental and manual labour and the historical development of ideologists on an increasing scale.

However the general economic development produces contra-

dictions which determine the forms of ideological practice by determining the specific articulations of the division of mental labour. It is here that we need to locate the problem of authorship. Willemen appears to see the concept and function of authorship as co-terminous with the development of the capitalist mode of production and as in a non-contradictory relation to it, when he writes that: 'It is the conjunction of subjects constructed in/through discourse and capitalist relations of production which results in the notion of the author as we have come to know it' (p 61); and that: 'They are merely attempting to satisfy narcissistic and economic needs while upholding the currently dominant mode of production which engendered the possibility of that particular mode of production in the first place' (p 62). This position draws much of its weakness from the general Althusserian position on ideology which, for all its stress on relative autonomy, sees ideology as functional for a given mode of production and by so doing evacuates the sites of effective social struggle, a position legitimised rather than either explained or justified by the modulation towards psycho-analysis. Whereas I would wish to stress the contradictory nature of the economic level as well as the contradiction between that level and the other levels of the social formation. The problem of authorship can only be properly approached if we stress not only the contradictions at the economic level between different modes of authorial production but also between these modes and ideologies of authorship.

Related to this point is the whole question of levels. This is important because debate in this area has focused upon the question of the relationship between the economic, ideological and political levels or instances, on questions of relative autonomy, determination in the last instance, correspondence or non-correspondence and so on, or as Brewster and Cowie put it, 'the relations between discursive formation and the relations of production'. The substance of the dispute between Coward and Hall et al hinges on this question. Not only has there been this continuing debate concerning the relationship between levels, but there have been implicit, if not explicit, splits concerning the pertinent area of analysis. For instance *Screen* has concentrated overwhelmingly on ideological analysis at the expense of economic analysis and this *prise de position* has been associated with an antagonism to 'economistic politics'. These debates and disagreements have, in my view, been based upon a false notion of levels which in general associates levels with largely discrete areas of concrete social practice (eg the economic is material production and circulation, the ideological is concerned with ideas and cultural forms, the political concern with political parties, the state and so on.) On the contrary, levels are not actual social practices but analytically distinct perspectives upon concrete social phenomena which are at one and the same time economic, ideological and political. The

130 division into discrete, relatively autonomous levels is also the historically determinate product within theory of the real movement of productive relation (in that sense it is an ideology). That is to say the discrete social practices to which these labels can be attached have actually become more differentiated, so that, for instance, ideologists appear to themselves and to others to be more independent of the sphere of material production, precisely because the progressive development of the social division of labour determines economically their actually greater separation. At the same time this actual, real, separation means that there is a greater, real, objective possibility of autonomy.

However what this development of concrete separation and its ideological expression within theory as distinct levels has done is direct attention away from the economic structure and determination of these relatively autonomous signifying practices. Away from the continuing truth that ideologists and the means of ideological production remain directly dependent upon the material productive labour of others and on the mode of distribution of their surplus product. Thus, Willemsen for example, can claim that the mode of existence (of ideology) is institutional and can define institutions as:

'social groupings whose coherence is determined by rituals, procedures, legal or journalistic definitions, constitutions, and so on – that is to say: by other discursive formations [which] function as machines freezing or producing specific unequal relations of force between ideologies, organizing them into determinate balances of force. But although they organize domination and repression, the very plurality of discourses to be organized and the plurality of institutions impinging upon each other, guarantee that institutions change or disappear. For instance, a change in personnel and/or alteration in the precariously held balance of forces between sets of discourses or between institutions (themselves held in encompassing institutions), can decisively affect the operation of that institution to the point where it may cease functioning or where it may have to be replaced by another institution' (pp 65-66).

In this formulation either the economic is being seen as merely one discourse among a plurality with no necessary dominance, or it is being entirely ignored, thus giving us no purchase upon one of the main mechanisms through which these institutions actually exercise their power of domination and repression and because of which the balance between such institutions changes. Here for instance the history of British broadcasting makes a classic study. The original form of the BBC was in part determined by struggle between competitive capital for control of a technology, ie the public corporation form was in part determined by the opposition of the electronic manufacturers to Marconi's monopoly control of key wireless patents, the non-commercial nature of the BBC being

determined in part by the relative (compared with the USA) underdevelopment of the advertising industry, by Press capital's fear of competition and by the influence of the relationships between a dominant ideological discourse concerning cultural standards (see the whole 'Culture and Society' tradition, especially Matthew Arnold) and the perceived ideological requirements of the hegemonic class formation. The shifting ideological role of the BBC since the 1950s has then been determined by the existence of ITV – the creation of a specific economic form of cultural production which is at the same time a concrete institutional moment within the cycle of British capital. This determination has been expressed not only through the complex economic relationships between ITV and BBC within a specific national monopoly capitalism but also by the differential relationship of ITV and the BBC, as distinct institutions, both with capital itself through exchange relationships (ie it makes a difference that the BBC is a non-profit organization which does not sell advertising time), but also with the specific form of the state as determined by the specific form of national capital (for instance programming in both BBC and ITV is determined by the specific strategic position of Britain within the international structure of media imperialism).

But in more immediate sense it is the direct economic control over ideologists that in good measure enables dominant ideologies actually to dominate. Across a wide range of ideological production this power is directly exercised by private capital ie in newspapers, films, commercial publishing, the music industry. The exercise of this power takes different, historically and institutionally specific forms, themselves in part economic, which always require specific analysis. It is exercised through recruitment, training, the organization of the labour process and so on, and it is of course contested at various levels. The present situation with Times Newspapers (a management lock-out) is a dramatic example of a continuous process. We should never forget, however complex each specific instance, that fear of unemployment is a continually effective discourse for positioning the subject; and for the ideologists who are not already members of a fraction of the dominant class⁴ the economic margin of survival not only at the level of historically acquired need, but at an absolute level of need, is narrow.

Clearly the exercise of economic power by private capital over ideologists is not exercised with the same directness in such public sector spheres as education. Nonetheless I imagine that few members of SEFT would deny that the room for educational manoeuvre is strictly limited, in this period of education cuts, by struggles on the

4 See the work of Bourdieu and his colleagues (eg *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, London 1977) or of Bowles and Gintis (*Schooling in Capitalist America*, London 1976) for the continuing relevance of these factors within ideological production.

132 terrain of the state over the distribution of economic surplus and by the relationship, as structured by the state and by the balance of political forces, between, in marxist terms, productive and unproductive labour. To take one example, the current struggle throughout Western Europe, of which the post-Annan debate about a 4th UK television channel and local radio is only one instance, concerning the balance of force between commercial and non-commercial broadcasting, is an ideological struggle (ie commercials, as an instance of signifying practice, carry a specific ideology); a political struggle over the forms and powers of the bourgeois state and its relationship to civil society, and an economic struggle by surplus capital seeking new areas for valorization: and it is these struggles at one and the same time and one because of the other. That is to say the substance of the political struggle is in a dialectical relationship not only with the specific economic struggle but with the wider structure of force between state and civil society which is itself in part determined by the specific historical stage of the development of the economic level. The inter-relationships become clearer if one analyses concrete historical moments with analytical concepts which are themselves seen, as Marx himself saw them, as historically determined. That is to say the pertinence of the concepts of the economic, of the ideological, and of the political, shifts according to the historical conjuncture being examined. That is to say the nature of the economic and its relation to the ideological will be different in theory because different in the real world in say the mid-1840s when *The German Ideology* was written and in the 1970s.

But what is at issue is not just the pertinence of this or that perspective within theory, but of where we choose to employ our always material intellectual labour. Given that intellectual and political action is based upon gambles concerning judgements of probability, simply because we all, both as individuals and as social groups, have limited time and energy and so we have to make choices and these choices are based upon assumptions and necessarily imperfect knowledge, I would give little attention to psycho-analysis and a great deal to political economy. I would argue for this because I believe (of course I cannot prove it), that such an emphasis will be more productive when judged in terms of its effectivity upon the real through political action in its widest sense. Such a choice is, of course, ideological and it is made merely by one of these 'imaginary' writers, I choose to go on calling an individual, upon the basis of his positioning within a plurality of discursive formations. That state is inescapable, but the ultimate test of the rightness of such a choice is made, not within ideology or theory, but in the real:

'The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question.

Man must prove the truth, ie the reality and power, the this-worldliness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question' (Karl Marx, 2nd Thesis on Feuerbach, in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* vV, 1845-47, p3, London 1977).

Thus the argument with the *Screen* line that I have sketched out here is not just a theoretical question fought out at the ideological level, but is also and at the same time an economic question. I can best illustrate this by examining *Screen's* own practice and mode of existence. *Screen* is dependent through SEFT upon a subsidy from the BFI which comes from the tax revenue of the state. Since in general such cultural subsidies are a form of regressive taxation, that is to say the subsidy of the cultural and ideological production and consumption of fractions of capital out of the wages of workers; since one of the main forms of ideological domination to which Marx and Engels pointed in *The German Ideology*, a form of domination that remains important, is the non-availability of economic surplus to the working class for the payment of ideologists and for the maintenance of means of ideological production (the balance of power between left and right in the Press, for instance) how the limited funds that could be so available (in this case SEFT's subsidy) are used is a matter of direct material and economic importance within the political sphere. From this perspective my charge against *Screen* is not only that it could have spent its money more usefully, but also that 'theoretical practice' and its psychoanalytic variants are, in the precise sense of the term, an ideology, that is to say the means by which ideologists disguise not only from others but also from themselves their concrete relationship to the material determinants of the real and thus through mystification make more difficult both the concrete study of those determinants and efforts to resist and change them.

Such an ideological stance may of course be inevitable precisely because a more concrete and directly useful analysis of ideological institutions would lead to a removal of the subsidy. But if that is true, it speaks clearly about the nature of the actual enterprise, and of the economic determinant of signifying practice. I am not blaming anyone. We all live these contradictions. But I am pointing out that the theoretical work of *Screen* is economically dependent upon a particular structure of surplus extraction and distribution, an economic institution which has been dubbed 'monopoly capitalism', that this concrete relationship poses real ideological choices with real political effects and that some evidence in the pages of *Screen* that it is important to understand the nature of these determinations would not come amiss.

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Response to 'The Two Worlds of Marrakech'

Tony Beeton

I would like to begin with an insistence that criticism should initially define its field and methods. This implies awareness of its own historical and social situation. It isn't enough to insist on the specificity of a particular film-text when this blocks the more fundamental task of charting the ideological basis of the text – that is the totality of its situation within the culture which produces it. Not that thorough textual analysis isn't a very necessary part of critical work, merely that the primacy lies elsewhere.

Liz Brown's article in *Screen*, Summer 1978, v19 n2, with its proposed 'feminist-ethnographic' reading of *Some Women of Marrakech* was a fascinating piece, but one which lacked a perception of the overall situation of anthropological film in our society. Since she begins (more or less) by saying:

'On one level, as an ethnographic film made for television, it raises the question of the production constraints and conventions specific to the *Disappearing World* series. It stands both as a reference to films made in the field by anthropologist film-makers, and more importantly as a textual instance of the television institution.'

(p 86)

and again a little further on:

'It must be stressed that although no film can be simply reduced to the conditions of its production, there are moments at which a consideration of those conditions is crucial to an understanding of a film's operation. This is particularly important when discussing ethnographic film, for it is only by introducing production constraints into the arena usually reserved for discussion of representation that one can begin to talk about film as evidence.'

(pp 87-88)

it is strange that these issues (understood in the widest possible sense) are left for peripheral consideration.

Now at one point in her article (p 92) Liz Brown draws attention to a letter I wrote to *RAIN* (n18, February 1977 pp 14-15) in which I took their printed film criticism to task for inadequate and naïve attitudes towards their subject. Borrowing a phrase from one of the reviews I reviewed. I pointed out that a *Disappearing World* film 'was precisely a fancy piece of television entertainment'. This letter of mine was intended as a polemical spur to anthropologists interested in film. Indeed, it concluded with a quotation from Jean Luc Godard which I hoped would provoke someone somewhere into responding: 'The imperialist idea of the real is taking the place of the real itself'. It was never my intention to argue that ethnographic films made for television were to be seen *only* as fancy entertainment, rather that whatever else they might be they were also, *a priori* (from television's definition of itself), *divertissements*. This has important consequences for what Liz Brown has to say since she claims that her article will undermine this very idea. 'It is tempting to allow the notion of the television film to override an examination of the specificity of the films themselves,' she says, 'and it is equally tempting to see them as entertainment or as popular television' (p 92). But that, after all, is what they are. There's nothing wrong with that fact if it is acknowledged, and if its implications for criticism are recognized. It seemed to me however when I wrote that letter, that anthropologists were playing down the conditions of production of films at great risk to their understanding of what the films were saying about the world and how they were setting about saying it. It seemed that they were totally, probably blissfully, unaware of these dangers. I suspect that Liz Brown may have underestimated them somewhat in the face of an admiration (which I share) for what the *Disappearing World* team have achieved.

It is all very well to turn to a particular text and to point the way to a 'feminist-ethnographic' reading. But it was surely not insignificant that the reviews of this film when it first appeared spent far more time over the 'all-woman crew' than they did over the film itself. Illustrative stills were frequently of the director, Melissa Llewelyn-Davies, rather than of the eponymous participants, the subjects, of the film. Not that Liz Brown's analysis wasn't necessary to redress the balance somewhat, but even then she is in one sense pointing the way to a reading of the text which objectifies images of Moroccan women's life and appropriates them to an argument conceived within the historical and social specificity of Britain today. Television itself is part of the cultural apparatus which transforms the world into a spectacle for consumption. Unless we realize that, we shall be looking at individual texts in a vacuum – more than that, in the fragmented and decontextualized manner encouraged by dominant ideology.

I cannot enter into a detailed discussion of these problems here. In general we have simply to remember that the particular sort of

knowledge which underpins academic research and advertising 137
 films alike derives from a consistent approach to the world. An approach which treats the world as a commodity to be bought and sold, to be moulded into a consumer's dreams. Such a world has to be knowable – the facts and principles governing it must be susceptible to the probings of appropriate specialists. Since this knowledge is a form of power it is guarded by inaccessability. When the world consists of biology, physics, anthropology, economics, geology, sociology and so on it is relatively safe from total critiques. Similarly to call something, some form of knowledge about the world, 'ethnographic' is to enshrine a particular view of the world. Ethnography assumes that we can approach an understanding of cultures other than our own by observation. Such may be the case. Equally we cannot be sure and – here's the rub – when we display the results of our ethnography by writing or projecting film that we have moved beyond such argument. Why? Because to 'talk about' ethnography in these ways is a sort of appropriation: the images we make work for us have been removed from their own situation and are deposited, rootless, to become something quite different in this new context. Whatever the motives involved in their display they are now 'looked at'. This is a passive role – the role of an object absorbed into a system of consumption. All ethnography is, in this one very special sense, voyeuristic.

So when Liz Brown says that *Some Women of Marrakech* 'steps outside the boundaries and conventions of a film about "people of other cultures" and makes a statement about all women.' (p 87) she is enshrining one notion of what ethnography can do, and thus missing the opportunity to challenge an assumption which underpins the boundaries and conventions of a film about people of other cultures in the first place. The film may be using those Moroccan women as a metaphor for all women, and for the situation of women here and now, but it is not a film 'about' all women. Nor about 'some' women of Marrakech. It is rather a 'talking-about women'. The reality of the situation ostensibly reported, ie that of some women in Marrakech, is used to support arguments drawn from the culture of the film's producers. The viewers (of its television transmission) are misled not by hidden cuts – or not only by them – but by the basic deceit (or, more precisely, conceit) that this is documentary reportage such as they have come to expect from the series of television films called the *Disappearing World*. This reading would appear to be shared by anthropologists – people one might term interested professionals – as the *RAIN* review (n19 April 1977 p 7) cited by Liz Brown testifies. It offers a critique based on the reviewer's own knowledge of Morocco and on the ethnographic correctness (or otherwise) of the film. It concludes with the words: 'I would like to see it again, but I doubt that it can be very useful for teaching.'

Leaving aside the pedagogical questions raised by that negative

138 evaluation of the film's usefulness to students, let me continue by insisting that these connotations of verisimilitude are fundamental to most readings of the film. *Some Women of Marrakech* appears to be telling us about the 'previously unfilmed' life of women behind the veil in Marrakech. Ignoring the difficulties posed by modernity versus tradition, by class differences between the women filmed, by the clear bikini marks in the (*hamman*) bathing sequences (and which women would consent to being filmed in such a situation anyway? Surely not the traditionally minded ones?), by the extent to which the film does or does not actually show life as lived by women in contemporary Marrakech, we can say that this film has in common with other *Disappearing Worlds*, and with other anthropological documentaries, the presentation to the spectator of an image of the world outside his or her immediate experience; an image for consumption like any other product.

The phrase 'previously unfilmed' is pure advertising copy. Even were we to allow that there may be some academic advantage for anthropologists in seeing this new footage, it still has uncomfortable resonances of the Victorian explorers' 'unexplored' dark continents. The implication is that our exploration or filming somehow confirms or even confers existence. Experience of the world 'out there' is expressed – even validated – in terms of consumption.

Now it is a, perhaps unfortunate, fact that the *Disappearing World* series had become – before its enforced absence from the screens – something of a yardstick for ethnographic films in general. At least as far as the television audience was concerned. So it is rather important to examine the meanings generated by the series as well as by the individual films. The specificity of the text is firmly established within the context of the series, as Liz Brown makes clear: 'At the very start of the film we are introduced to the world of Morocco just as we are introduced to all the other "worlds" in the series' (p 96). So we should consider the series as a whole, to see how it meshes into the system of utterances called television documentary films, in order to discover part of how the individual films mean what they mean.

A few general points here about what Liz Brown says on this subject will have to suffice. The first thing to be said is that I would be rather more cautious in stating the characteristics of a *Disappearing World* programme. Liz Brown says that:

'in general there is an increasing tendency in television documentary towards one the one hand a more journalistic approach, and on the other to a convergence with drama. Although the *Disappearing World* series – as its title indicates – began by dealing with threatened peoples in a manner which raised current and dramatic issues (*Last of the Cuiva*, *War of the Gods*, *End of the Road*) the series became progressively more ethnographic in its attempt to introduce a broad sociological framework into films about particular

But *The Sakuddei* (1974), *Sherpas* (1977), and *Eskimoes of Pond Inlet* (1976) all deal with threatened peoples and raise current issues. Certainly there are differences between *War of the Gods* (1971) and *Sherpas*, but there is also a good deal in common. It is too easy to say that there has been a consistent development through the *Disappearing World* series towards more anthropology. Without the attention to what that means (even if it were true) it would be a sterile point to make. It is necessary to look instead at the question 'why a *Disappearing World*?'

Brian Moser, the series' editor, has given some of the answer in a Granada Television publicity blurb for the 1975-6 season of films:

The idea to make *Disappearing World* originated in 1968 when I was making films for *World in Action* in South America. A group of Indians whose music a friend and myself had recorded 8 years before had vanished, killed by measles. Another group, the Cuiva, were being massacred by cowboys desperate for land. The conditions faced by tribal Indians in South America were so distressing that we felt it essential to bring the subject into people's homes.

Our aim was two-fold: to document on film various peoples and their ways of life before they disappeared, and, in these early films, to show the plight of minority peoples who were struggling to retain their own identity when confronted by the overbearing forces of the modern world.

In other words the *Disappearing World* springs out of a complex of feelings about the relationship between ourselves, our society, and certain outsiders. It is more or less a statement of the liberal view of the world which came to be dominant in academic and television circles in the late sixties. It reflects in its turn some of the disillusion with 'progress' and the spread of 'civilization' which was virtually taken for granted as being beneficial only a decade earlier. Faced with an unprecedented material affluence which was nevertheless unable to make a better life for all, many members of a middle-class intellectual elite found a stimulus in the making of 'concerned' films. While it would not be true to say that this refraction of personal doubts and uncertainties was the only factor involved, this emphasis is useful in making this basic point: that we have to look at the historical and social situation of the series, of anthropology, and of all the rest before we can legitimately say 'this is a reading of a *Disappearing World* film'.

Liz Brown is not unaware of several of these points. She mentions the concept of the spectacle, and allows that the editing process 'undermines many of the notions of documentariness and ethnographicness that are implicit in discussions of ethnographic film'

140 (p 94). But this awareness seems not to be translated into the critical work it demands.

Liz Brown writes:

*While I welcome the comments Tony Beeton has made on my article, there is a fundamental difference between us over the purpose of film criticism and the manner in which it should be conducted, and not one which I think can easily be resolved. My article dealt with a particular film which was itself part of a series, financed by a particular company which is one of the major components of the British television network, which in turn is a major element in 'British culture' and of course in the British economy. I indicated the effects of these instances in the opening passages, but it seems that what Tony Beeton looked for in vain was an analysis of the interconnection of these elements into a totality, the demonstration of (in this case) the 'overall situation of anthropological film in this country'. Since my paper was an implicit critique of such forms of analysis, I am relieved that he therefore judged it defective, that the piece resisted the reading which he sought to give it. Where he and I disagree is in the role of such analyses: where he looks for the constitution of totalities, I attempt to demonstrate the diversity of the film text – specifically the divergence of *Some Women of Marrakech* as feminist and ethnographic statements.*

*My opening remarks about the *Disappearing World* series were not then designed to 'situate' the film, but rather indicate some of the conditions bearing on its production and distribution. Some of these were then used to discuss the limitations and possibilities of the film, some were simply introduced to familiarize the reader with some of the problems to which the film was addressed. Thus for example the analysis was implicitly directed against those analyses which seek in specific texts manifestations of universal modalities – be it bourgeois ideology, the television institutions, or English culture. In such forms of analysis there is a constant movement away from specific texts to universal phenomena, the purpose of the analysis is to facilitate such a movement. It seemed to me that such a position cannot be effectively criticised, only countered; thus the concern with the particular narrative architecture of *Some Women of Marrakech*.*

In doing this, I sought to make the film available for critical discussion as a film for television, demonstrating the manner in which certain issues were raised and resolved in the film apparatus, and showing how such considerations were inseparable from the feminist or ethnographic uses to which it might be put. I do not believe that the demonstration of the film as part of a fetishistic cultural apparatus would further anything other than a philosophi-

*cal reflection on the nature of the world and our place in it. It would 141
be far more useful, I thought, to attempt an analysis that could
stimulate discussion of the film as a film text, rather than (as is
usually the case in such instances) yet another exemplar of women's
oppression or the television apparatus.*